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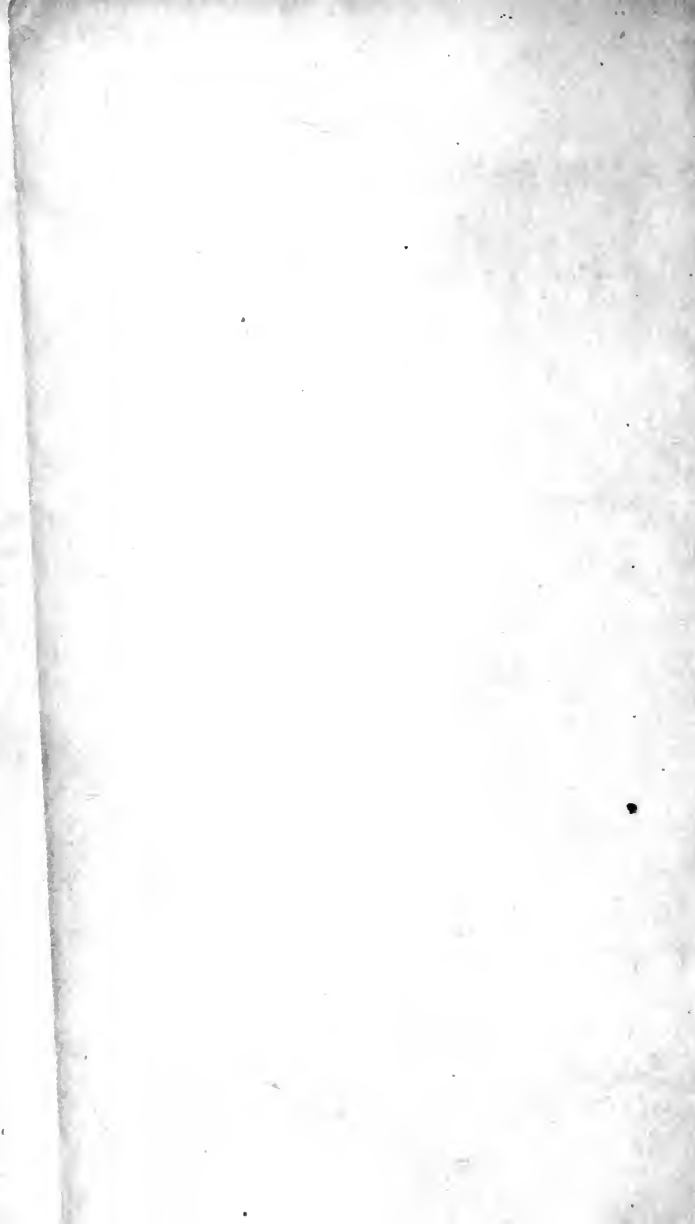
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THE
INHABITANTS OF EARTH;
OR,
THE FOLLIES OF WOMAN.

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

ANTHONY FREDERICK HOLSTEIN,

AUTHOR OF

SIR OWEN GLENDOWR; LOVE, MYSTERY, & MISERY; THE
ASSASSIN OF ST. GLENROY; THE MISERIES
OF AN HEIRESS, &c.

Thou smiling queen of every writer's breast,
Indulgent Fancy! from the fruitful banks
Of Avon, whence thy rosy fingers call
Fresh flowers and dews to sprinkle on the turf
Where Shakespeare lies, be present: and with thee
Let Fiction come, upon her vagrant wings,
Wafting ten thousand colours through the air,
Which, by the glances of her magic eye,
She blends and shifts at will, through countless forms,
Her wild creation!

AKENSIDE.

VOL. I.

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1811.

REPORT TO THE SENATE

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS

OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION

PASSED BY THE SENATE, JANUARY 18, 1867

AND A RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 1, 1867

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v. 1

P R E F A C E.

AGAIN I wield the pen of author-
 ship, and send forth another offspring
 to the world; but, alas! not like the
 progeny of the famed monarch of the
 clouds, will a Minerva issue from my
 far less potent head. A very *mortal*
 in power, I entail upon my bantlings
 all the errors of their father; and dis-
 play, in my poor descendants, a mot-
 ley volume of virtue and vice, who
 formed for mere "inhabitants of earth,"
 are incapable of soaring far beyond
 VOL. I. B their

Gen Res Roy 24 Ag 53
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 McLaughlin 9 Dec 53

their native sphere of action: yet I still trust that morality will remain a leading and prominent feature; and while that adheres to the heart, errors of judgment, frivolity of style, or failure in superior talent, will, I fondly hope, receive from that some mantle of apology. Thus I have ventured to obtrude no faultless gallants, nor “women divine;” since, alas! perfection, in no shape, will adorn my little world of human beings; for here

“Folly mounts the throne,

And plays her idiot antics: like a queen,

A thousand garbs she wears, a thousand ways

She wheels her giddy empire.”

Although I have conformed to an established rule, of selecting one character

racter as the nominative heroine of these volumes, yet will the title of my book anticipate its contents, as attempting the memoirs and delineation of many of the sons and daughters of mortality, and that they are alternately brought forward, according to their immediate connexion with the general plot of the Work.

Again, and yet again, I offer my sincere thanks to those who have in so liberal and benevolent a manner nurtured the feeble efforts of my youthful pen ; and I trust that time and experience will prove the effectual correctors of my style, language, and imagination, three of the greatest auxiliaries in that department of literature I

have embraced, and from the encouraging generosity of the Public, I am now induced to pursue.

London, March, 1811.

THE
INHABITANTS OF EARTH.

CHAP. I.

A strange dissembling sex we women are:

Well may we men, when we ourselves deceive.

SHAKESPEARE.

Disobedience, or the spoiled Beauty.

IN an elegant spacious drawing-room, in the modernized Gothic edifice of Trent Abbey, situated in the county of Stafford, sat a very fine attractive young woman, blooming in all the brilliance of juvenile beauty, expensively attired in a dress which displayed even the very fantasy of fashion, guided by original taste, and a self-consci-

ousness of the loveliness of that person which dared assume any garb that whimsical fancy dictated ; a table of curious Indian wood stood immediately before her, bearing for her use a portable ivory writing-desk, inlaid with silver workmanship, of foreign ingenuity ; a half-written letter was thrown aside, while with her pen she was occupied in tracing a face on a wafer, and laughing over the caricature resemblance to which she, in this manner, had given birth. While thus employed, a door of the apartment was thrown open, and a gentleman entered, in age perhaps beyond the exact meridian of life, but whose person boasted not marked characteristic as peculiarly its own, since it simply displayed only those which Nature has indiscriminately lavished on numbers of her offspring : his figure, his air, his manner, was that of the gentleman ; and a youth of dissipation had left its furrowed marks on his spacious forehead, while the gathering frown of paternal displeasure deepened these

these indentures, and irritation lent sparkling fire to his angry eyes—"Well, Miss Vincent, how much longer is this most extraordinary conduct to last?"

"I have not quite calculated," said the fair Florence, half glancing towards his countenance with infinite *nonchalance*, and then again looking down on the desk, where lay her puerile employment.

"You will then begin your calculations too late," returned the incensed father—

"Child, child, you will never secure a husband such——"

"And what then?" was interrupted with quickness—"I shall never be a wife!—truly I believe you, my dear sir; for no sensible man will have a wish for success; and I can venture to promise never to become the wife of an insensible one. So here rests all my matrimonial chances."

"Florence, be serious, be rational."

"That is not in my power; therefore lay not the sin of disobedience here to the account of voluntary offence: you know

by experience, my good sir, that all my follies are involuntary."

"Yes; I suppose that of not joining the party in the water-excursion to-day, for instance, when I expressly wished it?"

"No; I will tell you exactly how that happened: an universal teasing to go, teased me into staying at home."

"The very spirit of contradiction confessed!—But know, young woman, that I will not much longer tolerate this capricious frivolity, this unpardonable defiance of parental authority: I have often, in the most energetic language, declared the advantage, the gratification I should myself derive from it, nay, the absolute necessity there is for your forming, as soon as possible, a matrimonial establishment; and to-day, for instance, you have obstinately thwarted my reasonable expectations, from the mere spirit of caprice."

"Now, my dear father, be calm and considerate. What possible advantage could have accrued from my being enrolled in
the

the party Mrs. Bentinck formed for this aquatic excursion? For, as to her nephew the major, I have, it is true, amused myself with him, as an entertaining animated flirt; but as a husband—Heavens! only picture poor Horace a benedict! why, it would be treason against the very court of Cupid; for he must then inevitably lose his spirit, his vivacity, his enchanting versatility.”

“Never heed the extinction of the latter; Florence, since his wife would throw a double portion into the wedded lot:” and Mr. Vincent pronounced this in a half-subdued tone of anger, as he surveyed his beautiful girl, whose Hebe-smiles, as they dimpled the blooming cheeks they adorned, by gratifying the pride and vanity of the parent, gained over the weaker and more vulnerable particles of his heart, to aid the forgiveness of the thoughtless culprit: then, as if again recollecting himself into severity, his voice assumed its pristine harshness—“But enough, quite

enough of this idle trifling : beware, Miss Vincent, of longer delaying your election, of thus childishly sporting with every man who addresses you with your father's sanction. Must I again repeat the sorrowing tidings, that, at my death, you will be left a destitute dependent orphan? is it necessary once more to remind you, that my estates are entailed on the male issue of the Vincent family? the next inheritor will, in consequence, be a very distant relation : thus, only during my life, all the luxuries of existence are yours. But habits of expence are too natural to me to be renounced ; the extravagance of my disposition, the hereditary pride of my constitution, those pleasures which are, from the custom of revolving years, become actually necessary to my very existence, and without which life would be a burthensome vacuum ; these united wants absorb my whole annual income, and have even involved me in debts of fearful magnitude, which, were I even now to bow
my

my spirit to retrenchment of that style of splendour in which I have been accustomed to meet the public eye, could not, most probably, be liquidated during the few years to which I can now look forward as a sojourner on earth. You, Florence, are an only child, I may add, the only being in creation whose fate seriously interests me; and it has, through my exertions, been more than once in your own power to have rendered it an enviable and most distinguished one. Acting with perfect candour in my declarations to yourself, I have not hesitated in labelling to rumour abroad an impression of your being a young woman of very considerable fortune, while the whole appearance of this mansion, the equipage which constantly attends your movements, the retinue of attendants that await you at home, and the splendour, even sumptuousness of our entertainments, facilitate the circulation of the idea. I am a man of the world, Florence."

“*Le père à la mode*,” coolly interrupted the incorrigible daughter, as she folded her arms over the desk, and very attentively surveyed the earnest speaker—“But suppose that, when about to cage the flutterer, the golden crest should drop, and discover the *valuable* bird one of the *mocking* tribe?”

“Still invaluable then, I hope,” he rejoined, “although its first note of attraction be borrowed. A portionless beauty is generally shunned by her greatest admirers, lest they should become seriously entangled in an imprudent attachment, and thus do not allow her an opportunity to secure conquest. But where a man conceives he can at once unite the perhaps ignoble, but certainly prevalent motive of *interest*, to the call of passion, he resigns himself to the indulgence of the latter thus supported; and when at length love gains the helm, and secures its station, Plutus himself would desist from contest; for however the individual attachment of our
sex

sex has become debased, as a sentiment, as a passion, it still maintains its supremacy ; and when the auspices of high connexions and respectable protection bar the possibility of obtaining the desired object by easier means, matrimony often becomes the price ; men pay for the at first inconsiderate indulgence of personal admiration. But why should I recount all my many past efforts to secure your establishment in life, since your folly has ungratefully thwarted my numerous projects ? Ridicule is no attraction, when sported by a young or even lovely woman ; and you not only possess, but carry it to a most reprehensible extent. Your pretences to wit are preposterous—you, in justice, cannot claim it ; and if your play upon words was ever so apt, so brilliant, it would avert rather than encourage love ; it repulses your most devoted admirers ; and those more insignificant in their own abilities, shrink from becoming objects for your laughing satire ; while the more solid and estimable turn
with

with disgust from your flippant, giddy, and capricious manner—this wayward folly, arising from self-elated beauty. But too soon the temporary queen of an unstable throne will be hurled from her dazzling eminence; already the clamours of a herd of creditors resound on every side; and more than one have, within the last few weeks, even dared to threaten legal measures to extort their just demands. Procrastination is all that lies in my power, and that short uncertain period of continued affluence it doubly behoves you to turn to every advantage within your present grasp; the day of ruin fast approaches, the day that strips your father of his meretricious station in society; and with the deprivation of worldly distinctions, that world is lost to him for ever; the mind of Vincent knows not to bend to circumstance, he will never voluntarily bow to the storm that must otherwise crush him; it may, nay, it *will* annihilate his existence; but, living, he will never submit to degradation

education in society: the great world is the theatre on which, from childhood, I have played my part; error gave me birth, error consummated my education, and guided my juvenile pursuits; leaving to old age but a sense of the real nature of its early directress, and powerless to cast from me that syren, at once despised and beloved."

The colour faded from the cheeks of Florence, her eyes fell, in apprehensive retreat, from the survey of a parent's gloomy brow, as now, more in sorrow than in anger, it told a fearful tale. Mr. Vincent marked the effect of his serious observations with no inconsiderable satisfaction; and when the softened tearful eyes of Miss Vincent, in timid apprehension, again sought those of her father, with an expression of tender penitence for past offence, rather in pity to his desponding sufferings than selfish consideration for her own fate, she beheld so complete a revolution in the countenance of Mr. Vincent, as, clad in smiling approbation, it now had assumed a
look

look of gracious pleasure, that Florence immediately doubted the possibility of the direful intelligence communicated, and at once concluded it a mere phantom, conjured by her father to terrify her into a marriage of interest; and a moment's additional reflection confirmed her in the belief, that the approaching day of ruin had been so long threatened, and so long had delayed its appearance, that she became equally incredulous as the good people of fabled memory, in the nursery story of "*The Boy and the Wolf*," if it may be deemed allowable to introduce this Gothic simile in the memoir of a fashionist.

Thus impressed, Florence again sported with a subject that otherwise might have arrested her *sombre* and painful reflections; and again assuming her most provoking tone of irony, gaily observed she would, when this most shocking era of disastrous penury arrived, turn tragic actress on the occasion, which she thought would be most conformable to her father's wishes, since
the

the boards of a theatre were now indeed the first stage of matrimony.

Mr. Vincent, who, in this flippant speech, traced only the accustomed caprice of his inconsistent girl, felt all his regret superseded by anger, and sternly, authoritatively replied—"Very well, Miss Vincent; this levity will be its own punishment. But I now offer one *last* appeal to your thoughtful consideration, and it may perhaps carry more weight with it than many of my former, since a coronet is said to be the very loadstone of a woman's compass."

"I do not comprehend you," said Florence; "my dear sir, I pray you explain—I am all impatience at this enchanting prelude."

There was an increase of equivocal archness in her manner and tone of voice; but the irritated parent gravely continued—"The estate of Bromley, a few miles from this, has recently been purchased by the earl of Trelawney, who, I understand, will arrive at the Park next week, and purposes
passing

passing there, every summer, the greater part of the season. He has a son, a very young man, who has seen little of the world as yet, and whom his father has strangely educated at home; nor suffered him to receive the advantages of public tuition—You understand me, Florence?”

“Yes, sir; and I believe it is more than Lord Leslie himself could; for, not comprehending, he cannot understand: he is something of the savage, the idiot, the natural, says fashionable rumour.”

“And therefore, Florence, a most suitable match for you.”

“In one respect, I really should like him extremely,” continued Miss Vincent gravely, “yes, even better than all the herd who have gone before; for ‘*children and fools*,’ the adage says, ‘*sometimes tell truth*;’ and a truth-telling lover would be so novel, so singular, so *unique*! I must be quite enamoured, from the very oddity of the courtship, since I admire every thing strange, and I detest every thing *natural*—

A luckless

A luckless recollection that!—How intolerably provoking then that, in consequence, I cannot entirely even approve him! for I fear he is *too much* of the natural. So farewell, sweet coronet; for unless thou couldst display other supporters, thou wouldst totter on my brow, a burthensome weight.”

To what extent of passion this flippant disregard to his wishes might have roused Mr. Vincent is uncertain, but the storm of indignation was allayed by his eyes happening to glance on the half-written letter of his daughter, addressed to lady Fitz-Arnold. This elderly female was a widow of considerable fortune, and had no nearer relative living than the daughter of Mr. Vincent, to whom she was connected on the maternal side; and it rested much in the power of Florence to acquire the favour of this lady, from the maintenance of a correspondence which had been voluntarily desired by the latter. A remark of
approval

approval told Mr. Vincent's observance of the letter.

"It is not quite finished yet," returned his daughter; "the ridiculous countenance of captain Warner came across my memory, and I could not resist transferring my pen from that letter to trace the precious little coxcomb."

"Just like your customary habits, Florence, to leave a proper respectable employment, for an idle reprehensible spirit of ridicule. But I hope what you have written is with perfect deference, and sedately couched; for you know the serious character of lady Fitz-Arnold, and you ought to accommodate your sentiments, observations, and expressions, to her inclinations; and thus conciliate, as I trust you have done, a useful friend. You know not how far such conduct may serve your interest—it may be to you the means of securing a considerable legacy."

"And from that motive, my father, believe

lieve me, I will never act thus; I have too proud, too sincere a heart, I trust, for this disguise; this affected assumption of virtues that appertain not to my nature. Her ladyship shall see me such as I am, and if that be frivolous, absurd, capricious, at least I will not add dissimulation to my errors."

"Well, perverse and self-determined Florence, surely you can, without infringing on this boasted candour, as I perceive your letter will be as laconic as usual, offer an apology for brevity, and to make amends, render the closing professions the more warm and affectionate; for I understand, by a letter from our family lawyer in town, received to-day, that he has been ordered down to Norfolk by lady Fitz-Arnold, most probably to draw up her will in proper form; and this letter, as I have before observed, if respectfully indited, may be just in time to secure to you a handsome remembrance from the testator."

"No, sir, this information at once forbids

bids this paper journeying towards her ladyship; I regard lady Fitz-Arnold too highly, I respect her too sincerely, to suffer myself to appear before her the mere interested sycophant, the cringing hypocritical relative, who meanly professes at the shrine of wealth: her frown at my follies I could support, but her smile of contempt at my degradation, of my desertion of all generous, disinterested sentiment, would probe to the quick even my weak and careless heart."

The warm tear of affection, glistened in the sunny eyes of Florence, as she thus spoke; a vivid blush rose on either cheek, while the prompt impatient action of an ever-impulsive agent in life's little drama, scattered the torn fragments of the letter around. Passion blazed with redoubled violence on the swelling features of Mr. Vincent, and with its usual contradictory force, impeded the words that would have given vent to the fury of the moment; but fortunately, as Florence thought, he

was

was summoned away at this ireful epoch, by a servant entering to announce the arrival of a gentleman with whom he had pecuniary matters of moment to transact.

CHAP. II.

Away! it is the cozenage of their sex,
One of the common arts they practise on us. ROWE.

.....

And, lovely ladies, ere your ire,
Condemn the heroine of my lyre,
Shew me the fair would scorn to spy,
And prize such conquests of her eye. SCOTT.

A Friend and a Lover.

Miss Vincent looked after her father, even till the closing of the door had concealed him wholly from her view; but, in that look, no affection mingled; she had been taught by a mother to despise, condemn, and almost detest, the paternal protector that mother had voluntarily bestowed on her!

her! Reflection, nay, even serious reflection, for nearly ten minutes, was visible in the speaking countenance of Florence Vincent; then suddenly starting up, she half breathed a discontented sigh—"I wish I was on the river now—I wonder to whom Bentinck is at this moment speaking."

An elegant conservatory adjoined the room where our heroine now was, and approaching it, she began tying up a beautiful exotic on the little green twig placed for the support of the delicate plant; then suddenly rending the valuable blossom from its stem, dashed out of an open window the expensive produce of the preceding hour, simply because the flower would not hang in the fanciful direction her imagination dictated; then leaning out of the balcony, strained the vision of sight to its utmost extent, to catch a distant view of that river on which the party of Mrs. Bentinck were enjoying their gay excursion.

A quarter of an hour had fully passed,

still Florence lingered at the only window which commanded a view of the Trent ; but longer she was not suffered to continue her solitary meditation, for a domestic, in the loud cadence of nomination, announced a visitor. Miss Vincent turned quick, to greet the most favourite of companions, the dearest of friends, as affectionately extending her hand, she exclaimed—" Ellen, is it indeed you ?"

" Even so : but I am agreeably surprised to find you apparently so well, and at perfect ease ; for I really did imagine some serious misfortune, some direful malady, must have assailed you, and been the cause of preventing your joining that very party of Mrs. Bentinck, which arose almost from your own projection, and which you had anticipated nearly a week with such manifest delight."

" Yes ; and that one week's expectation wearied me with the subject—' *hope deferred maketh the heart sick ;*' and mine, in consequence, rejected the pleasure when it did

did arrive. But who informed you I was not amid the gay group?"

"Major Bentinck: I encountered him taking a walk in the fields, pastoralizing—a very Strephon!"

"And where is he now?" rejoined Florence, with quickness.

"In this very house, most probably; for he was accompanying me hither, and was detained by a passing acquaintance near the Abbey; but I was too impatient to wait the close of the dialogue, as I really have suffered much alarm on your account."

As she spoke, the gentleman in question appeared.

"Art thou the troubled spirit of the watery deep?" said the laughing Florence.

"In truth, a troubled spirit, I believe," returned the major, in similar tone, "having conjured up a thousand little imps of evil around me; for, on reaching the villa of Mrs. Bentinck this morning, where the party had engaged to rendezvous, I was informed you had written her a note, inti-

mating that you were unexpectedly prevented becoming a member of it; and consequently fearing that some serious event must have occurred to preclude your forming one of a party, in an excursion of which you only yesterday spoke so sanguinely of engaging in, I hastened to the Abbey, to be ascertained that no such personal ill attached to yourself as indisposition."

"No, not exactly indisposition, only ill disposed: I had first a whim to go, and then a whim to stay."

"Ladies are privileged to think twice, it is their sex's charter," said Bentinck, evidently attempting to suppress the rising emotion of painful anger, as, with affected carelessness, he turned over the leaves of a book that lay on the table.

Ellen, attracted by the beauty of a new and curious plant, had advanced into the conservatory, and a pause in conversation ensued; at length it was interrupted by our heroine—"I wish, major, you were a

blue uniform instead of a scarlet regimental; I am sure you would please our sex much more."

"A flattering preference!" returned the former, with a forced smile—"When such trifles can affect the heart of woman, I should doubt the validity of the regard."

"I agree with you—that is exactly what I think myself. Pray, my friend, how can such opposite characters contrive to accord so well this morning, as to have one and the same idea on this important subject of liking and disliking?"

Ellen, who had but partially heard the last sentence, now rejoined them, as she repeated—"I have often heard that trifles are of moment in love's calendar."

"Ah, my dear girl!" returned Florence, "we have not reached that book yet; we were only conning those of an inferior class; and for myself, I am certain I shall never reach beyond the first rudiments of Cupid's language; heart and soul are slow to learn even the verb, *I love*!"

Bentinck made no reply, though his looks, if they had been consulted, were sufficiently intelligible, and the subject changed to the passing topic of the weather; this discussed, Horace took up his hat, professed, in the coldest, most studied terms, his satisfaction at finding his fears, in regard to the health of Miss Vincent, groundless, and with a bow equally distant as elegant, retired: yet as he crossed the lawn, he half turned his view towards the left wing of the Abbey, to see if Florence, from the window where she sat, cast one look after his retreating steps. Florence did look, did witness the lingering glance of the lover, and a smile proclaimed the consciousness of her own continued empire.

CHAP. III.

Then comes that good old character, a wife,
With all the dear distracting cares of life ;
A thousand cards a-day at doors to leave,
And in return, a thousand cards receive ;
Rouge high, play deep, to lead the *ton* aspire,
With nightly blaze set Portland-place on fire ;
Snatch half a glimpse at concert, opera, ball,
A meteor, trac'd by none, though seen by all ;
And when her shatter'd nerves forbid to roam,
In very spleen rehearse the girl at home. ROGERS.

Domestic Anecdotes.

GENERAL Vincent, the gay and gallant Lothario of many an amorous tale, had, in early life, formed a family connexion with a female, whose fashionable pretensions to celebrity were perhaps rather greater than

a more prudential husband might have approved; but, to the moment of her exit from this life, she had borne his name, and beneath the sanction of his roof had continued to be received in that society to which, from fortune, family, and connexions, she claimed a right to move; while virtue frowned severe on those worldly supporters who sustained the nominal respectability of the immoral and frail Mrs. Vincent. Two sons had, in their minority, been left motherless; but, in truth, they had no cause to feel a deprivation in that event which death had inflicted on the family, for maternal affection had never been known to the children of general Vincent. The father, capricious in temper, erring in principle, and depraved in habit, was to them all things by turns, and nothing long; one moment lavishing the most pernicious indulgence, the next rebuking in the harshest tones of dictatorial authority; commanding and repelling affection in the same instant. The younger
son

son was of a temper lofty and ungovernable, one that militated against the arbitrary exertion of parental sternness, and refused to bow submission to a paternal despot: he absconded, at the age of thirteen, from his natal home, and was at length traced on board a tender, which he had entered as a common sailor. This act alarmed the pride of the imperious general; but in vain he sought to curb the rebellious spirit of Humphrey, or draw him back to the paths of filial obedience—he refused to surrender the nautical profession, to which his inclinations solely pointed; and the enraged Vincent, after getting him enrolled in the list of midshipmen, in another man of war than that where his degradation had been consummated, vowed for ever to banish him from his house, his heart, and his fortune; and too faithfully maintained this cruel resolution, to the last moment of existence.

On the heir of the Vincent estates now doubly devolved all the favour and atten-

tion of the father: in childhood, Humphrey had been the favourite son; and his resentment was now proportionably strong, as his partiality had formerly been great; while, to wreak still further his revenge on the rebellious son, he lavished wealth and affection profusely on the elder. Nature had given to this one of her offspring, a pleasing exterior, a tolerable understanding, a lively disposition, and warm passions; education had assisted the head alone, while heart and soul were suffered to take their chance in the motley warfare of life. Dissipation, in this youth, consequently gained a willing proselyte, and the most expensive pleasures marked his first impetuous onset in the world of fashion; while the prodigality of the erring father encouraged the wild unbounded extravagance of the son.

Love ever plays some part in the annals of man; nor did Robert Vincent escape the effects of this mortal tyrant. The object of his affection was vain, handsome, and

and vivacious—his equal, if not superior, in every respect; she was a woman the universal voice of that circle in which he moved proclaimed a most desirable match. Thus circumstanced, Robert could not doubt the ready approval of his father to so suitable a union; how great then was his surprise, to receive a decisive negative to his sanguine expectations, couched in terms that were marked by the most forbidding austerity! Still there was more of horror than anger in the countenance of the general, as he listened to the wild enthusiasm of ardent love painting the exuberance of its passionate devotion to lady Emily Walsham. Again and again the stern prohibition was repeated, again, and yet again, every remonstrance was essayed by the warm and impetuous Robert, whose feelings, at length raised to desperation, threatened to stem the torrent of the parental malediction, rather than renounce the object of his love, his adoration. At length, when expostulation proved

and abortive, the rash and precipitate lover, unaccustomed to controul, and unable to stay the throbbing ebullition of passion, avowed his firm resolve to brave every difficulty, and, even amid the penury of disinheritance, claim his beloved Emily for a bride.

Agitation, that proceeded from a more appalling source than ireful resentment, now appeared to harrow up the soul of general Vincent; the fatal secret was extorted—lady Emily Walsham was the offspring of matrimonial infidelity, in an illicit connexion between the countess and the father of Robert!—Aghast the wretched youth received the agonizing information, which forbade ought, save fraternal affection, to be from him the portion of his Emily; in wild dismay and anguished suffering, he sought one last sorrowing interview with the object of his first and fondest regard, while incoherent was the language that bade a last adieu.

The vain and equally passionate lady
Emily,

Emily, who had never dreamed of aught curtailing the limits of her sovereign power over the heart of a captive, when her own smiled sweet accordance to the theme of adoring love, traced, in this quiescent conduct, only a proof of a rebellious inconstancy of nature in him whose tale of attachment had been so warmly reciprocated; and now, in alternate tears and irritated exclamation, vented her grief on the maternal bosom.

The countess, who divined the cause of this renunciation of her daughter from the evidently still-devoted Robert, wrote, and demanded of him an interview; the result of which was, the revealment of his knowledge of their near relationship, clad in terms of respect, that the mother of his innocent Emily, rather than the licentious lady Walsham herself, could have commanded. The depraved demirep laughed, with almost insulting irony: Vincent shuddered—recoiled; but amazement locked the powers of articulation; while horror
overspread

overspread the features of the then dissipated, but yet not abandoned youth.

The countess appeared to derive amusement from the expression his features had assumed, and for many minutes sported in wanton cruelty with her astonished companion; then, with cold unblushing sarcasm, bade him not too severely reprobate the parent of his late affianced love, since his own mother had pursued the same unfettered course; neither to be distressed at the relationship of his *reputed* father to her daughter, for it was an acknowledged and universally-received fact, that the heir of the Vincent estates bore no filial affinity to the gallant general.

However strange this memoir may seem, however revolting to propriety, delicacy, and every feeling of the mind, yet *such things have been*; and the archives of real life present to my remembrance a similar occurrence as that which united the parents of our heroine; yes, and it will be recollected by *many*, that the parties figured
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in an elevated sphere, even in the purlieus of St. James's.

Each of the wedded pair trod the field of fashion; although, amid its various roads, the connubial friends soon branched into contradictory paths. Mr. Vincent became a *bon vivant*, a proselyte of the turf, and a devotee to the Board of Green Cloth; my lady Emily was the very divinity of novelty—a magazine of dress, a repository of taste. Who could vie with her ladyship in giving first-rate importance to the mere nothings of existence? in the art of trifling, and trifling arts, alike supreme. Yet more; the fair bride was a very *belle esprit* of the higher world, the coiner of modish phrases, the modeller of transparent fans, cottage netting boxes, pasteboard inkstands, and chimney-match figures, the inventress of new words, and the standard for novel pronunciation of old. Who had the temerity to doubt the genius of lady Emily Vincent, when beauty was the patent for all? But, alas! the fatal influence of gold was calculated

calculated to separate a pair so well adapted to concur in aiding the follies of the day ! The husband of two years complained of the expence and extravagance of his lady's eccentric whims, and even presumed to cast reflection on the sums that the editors of the diurnal puffing chronicles had exacted from the purse of the inventive genius, who, in her turn, alike freed from the bondage of Cupid, beheld, with quickened sight, the reprehensible pursuits of her husband, and smiled contemptuously on the reprover of her comparatively light expences, to those of the Newmarket disbursements and faro debts of the jockey and the gamester ; nor hesitated to hint at the mercenary extortions of an *opera chère amie*.

A year passed, in truth, in civil discord, since home was ever the scene of war ; and as personal attachment had yielded to the apathy of possession, a separation was no extraordinary event ; and on a limited allowance, annexed to what she had a claim to

to from her marriage-settlements, lady Emily Vincent was compelled, for the future, to exist, but on which her unfortunately expensive talents did not certainly live with their former *eclat*; and this was not to be endured, while the possibility remained of its being obviated; and to effect this, by regaining that gilded affluence which her separation had circumscribed, the young wife resolved upon converting her own fortune, which was left entirely at her free disposal, into an annuity for life, which again enabled her to shine a belle of first-rate splendour.

A daughter had been the only offspring of this union, and Mr. Vincent had an insuperable aversion to children, which made him consign to lady Emily the guardianship of Florence during her nursery years; but, although educated beneath a mother's roof, our heroine owed none of her juvenile improvements to maternal instruction or maternal care; fortunately, however, the governess, to whose entire superintendence

tendance the formation of her infant morals were committed, proved a woman of superior understanding and enlightened principles, sedulously imparting to her blossoming pupil the estimated precepts of religion and morality. Never did a fairer flower burst the bud of promise than the daughter of Mr. Vincent, when, at fourteen, she lost the best of friends, the excellent guide of her early youth, the exemplary instructress in all that was right; and at fourteen, from having been wholly neglected by her until then, Florence Vincent became the constant companion of her mother. Maternal vanity exulted in the triumph of that hereditary beauty transmitted to her descendant, who lived, in personal loveliness, the youthful image of her mother.

The day of admiration, as far as it was connected with herself, had now closed on lady Emily Vincent; she was not blinded to this circumstance; but, in the evening of retiring light, she hailed the planet which

which arose to shed lustre even on her retreating course: again she lived in the celebrity of her child, whom she viewed as a second self. Nature had given to Florence the light elastic spirits of buoyant thoughtless vivacity, a disposition open, generous, and sincere, warm and fervid in its impressions, of disinterested affection and independent sentiment: thus, from Nature, the amiable and the excellent visibly preponderated. Her understanding had less of solid retention than of elastic quickness; it expanded at the moment of exertion, but too often returned to its original confines, when the stimulating effort was passed. As a child, she both astonished and disappointed; for there was in her mind no equilibrium on which reason could securely rest: of cool industry, of methodical application, she had none; yet sometimes displaying all the pertinacity of perseverance in attaining an object, only to trifle away its actual possession.

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The prudential zeal and indefatigable attention of Mrs. Kelson, had given a sleeping potion to vanity; but a mother's puerile folly aroused the slumberer, who, like a giant refreshed, seized on the heart of his unwary prey with redoubled force.— To a child, even women played the flatterer, and admired, caressed, nay, adulated the promising Florence; and in this age of libertinism, where juvenility attracts in its first bloom far more than the maturer charms of polished woman, where the laughing school-girl and the nursery-produce of a miss in her teens, are more attractive to the man of *ton* and gallantry, than the expanded mind, the experienced observation, or the intelligent conversation of a stage beyond, can we wonder that Florence Vincent soon had the blush of ingenuous modesty converted into the flush of gratified vanity? that her cheeks crimsoned at the gaze of the stranger, and her brilliant eyes, as still they lowered beneath

neath the fixed survey of admiring man, yet bore, in their retiring fall, the full consciousness of their own power?

Three years more beheld Florence in heart a coquette, in person a belle, in fashion a wit; in fashion alone the latter, for, in reason's ken, no flash of wit could our poor heroine claim; but there was a witchery of vivacious manner, that gave to a mere play of words, and a fluency of language, an artificial brilliance, that amused and entertained; but this surreptitious *repartée*, this never-ceasing attempt at wit, would not have borne critical analization; and was, by the grave observer, only tolerated from her youth.—Nature had given her a countenance peculiarly adapted to aid the arch equivoque, the lively impromptu, or the sometimes-mingled childish and coquetish sally.

This frolic *badinage* has more attraction for men than they are inclined to avow;
and,

and, under certain restrictions, it yields to beauty the most pointed arrow of Cupid ; but, when it receives the tinge of sarcastic ridicule, it creates an ægis to repel its own triumph. Thus Florence, vain and presumptuous, twanged the bow of Venus to a dangerous verge ; and, at this critical juncture, she was bereft of her mother ; a fever, of one short week's duration, closed the life of the chaste but dissipated lady Emily Vincent.

To a father our heroine had now alone to look for parental protection, a father, against whom her mind had been early prejudiced by his wife, who had sought, with jealous tenacity, to secure the whole bent of filial affection to herself, and thus wreak an impotent revenge on him, who so early had sunk the ardent lover in the apathetic or reproving husband, whose character had been painted to Florence in a light the most sordid, selfish, and unprincipled—traits of disposition the best
calculated

calculated to inspire the aversion of his neglected child, who, with painful regret, felt the necessity of becoming an inmate of his mansion in Staffordshire.

CHAP. IV.

Cupid ne'er shall make me languish,

I was born averse to love ;

Lovers' sighs, and tears, and anguish,

Mirth and pastime to me prove.

BARBAULD.

Memorial of the past.

MR. Vincent received his daughter with a cordiality, an appearance of affection, wholly unexpected ; in truth, public encomium had wafted the praises of Florence as heralds to her *entrée* at Trent Abbey, and these well decked messengers of fame had penetrated the hitherto-closed portals of his heart. Within the last few months, he had even meditated her removal from beneath the roof of lady Emily Vincent to

his own dwelling ; but engagements of moment had delayed the execution of his project, until the death of his wife had rendered it a matter of necessity that he should become the protector of his own offspring.

Mr. Vincent surveyed his daughter with ineffable satisfaction, on finding that the panegyric on her personal loveliness had not been exaggerated ; how much proud delight was infused into his heart, at the prospect of having so brilliant a president to his ever-gorgeous and extravagant establishment ! nor was the strong resemblance to her mother unremarked, when, in the zenith of all her bridal attractions, he had known the dear exuberance of fondest passion. Memory conjured into regeneration from the depths of time, those transitory joys which a sincere, but fleeting attachment, had inspired ; while Mr. Vincent had, from experience, learned to number them as the happiest of his life, and mourned the inconstancy of his own nature, which had marred their continuance. Florence,

the young and beauteous Florence, as she burst upon him, the living memento of those days of impassioned tenderness, communicated an indescribable sensation to his heart, that awakened those softer feelings he had believed his long-alienated child could never have had power to affect.

The affection of Miss Vincent for her mother was indeed but a passing love ; lady Emily was not calculated to inspire that radical esteem, respect, and veneration, which can alone permanently secure the precious tears of ceaseless regret from the filial mourner. The tears of her daughter were unaffected, unfeigned ; but they were the produce of a transitory ebullition ; and, long ere twelve months had told their circuit, no anguished emotion heaved her bosom, her eyes no longer glistened with the soft tribute of sorrowing Nature, when the casual mention of her deceased parent revived on memory her recent loss.

A severe fit of gout had confined Mr. Vincent, for the greater part of the winter,

ter, to his room ; the late scene of death had, for a time, subdued the spirits of his daughter, and attuned them to a more serious, more reflective cast, than their antecedent bias. It was at this period she became the voluntary nurse of the invalid ; feeling, but not affection, was awakened for the sufferings of her father ; and his heart gratefully breathed a blessing on the head of that child, for care, attention, and kindness, to which he acknowledged he had no rightful claim, since neglect and indifference had, from him, been the portion of her nursery years.

When spring had burst the frozen shell of winter, Florence beheld no charms in the rural beauties of a country region—she sighed for London and its gay varieties ; but this regret lasted not long after the perfect convalescence of Mr. Vincent, and Trent Abbey once more became the seat of splendid festivity. Free permission was extended to invite whatever friends inclination prompted to partake the hospitality

pitality of his luxurious board ; and Mr. Vincent was never so animated and delighted, as when his daughter planned any new species of entertainment ; the more magnificent and costly, the more his erring pride was gratified and flattered.

The neighbourhood was by no means confined ; several families of high repute and worldly consequence were resident in the immediate environs ; while the vicinity of Litchfield, as a garrison town, contributed its aid to enliven the new abode of Florence, who no longer execrated the dullness of Staffordshire, but soon preferred her present situation to the past ; for, in the metropolis, rivals had intercepted the road to universal admiration. Florence was not the mere heroine of fiction, eclipsing each mortal fair in a society large and extensive as that in which she moved in town, since there were in London very many candidates of equal beauty, who could dispute the golden apple ; but, in Staffordshire, county influence stamped Mr. Vincent

cent with a personal consequence that extended to his daughter, and she reigned a little queen in the vicinity of Trent Abbey. None of the neighbouring families attempted to vie with the magnificence of the Vincent establishment, or the munificence of the Vincent hospitality; and she who presided over them, was, of course, an object of no trifling consideration. Thus was the pride, the vanity of our heroine, gratified to a flattering zenith, while coquetry had ample range in the military society that the neighbouring garrison afforded; and at the epoch when our little narrative opens, many had been the professed lovers of Miss Vincent; but among the herd, major Bentinck stood distinguished by a more dazzling assemblage of recommendation than usually appertains to the possession of one individual. To independent fortune and a family of the first respectability, was added a person that all deemed handsome, many irresistible; devoted to his profession, he added to distinguished va-

lour, all those impassioned feelings of refined susceptibility that bind man to the softer sex ; and no being was a greater devotee to female beauty than Horace Bentinck. His temper was arbitrary, warm, irritable, and rash ; while his disposition had that kind of electric sensibility which too often takes the turbulent tenacity of jealousy, when love attains the empire of the heart. Horace was then no perfect being ; it is true, he had none of the frivolities of Florence, but he was insensible to those faults he actually exhibited, and his greatest error was perhaps a too complete satisfaction of his own character. He had run the gauntlet of a mess-room quiz, by his attention to Miss Vincent ; he had uttered many tender sentences, of very pointed signification, of his serious intentions, which Florence had indirectly parried, and just left sufficient hope to gild the jealous gloom of half-repelled overtures ; for, like the witches of Macbeth, our erring heroine could keep the word
of

of promise to the ear, yet break it to the hope.

Whether Florence actually preferred major Bentinck, or whether he was the mere amusing devotee of the hour, it were, at this epoch of our history, a difficult matter to decide; certain it is, the fair in question could not herself have answered for the state of her own sentiments; the blind urchin was no match for Argus-eyed coquetry; but of this it is at present unnecessary to say more; the character of Miss Vincent was one that circumstance and situation could best develop, it was a heterogeneous medley of the amiable and the undeserving, of the estimable and the frail; for, to her, most visibly appertained all *the follies of woman*.



CHAP. V.

All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players :

They have their exits and their entrances ;

And one man, in his time, plays many parts.

SHAKESPEARE.

A first Visit, and its Impressions.

THE earl of Trelawney, accompanied by his daughter, arrived at Bromley Park in the course of the ensuing week ; and however Florence was refractory in fulfilling her father's wishes of forming an interested connexion, she yet felt no inconsiderable pleasure at the thought of enrolling the young nobleman in the train of her conquests ; and willingly acquiesced in the desire

sire of Mr. Vincent, that she should pay an early visit at the Park, to its new-inhabitant, lady Elizabeth Leslie.

The earl and his daughter happened to be both at home on the day of the Vincents' visit; and the latter received them with rather the stiff formal courtesy of antique manner, than the light ease of modern *nonchalance*. Her height was of masculine dimension, and the large bones of her limbs corresponded with the tall and unbending figure, which, although muscular; was not ill proportioned; in reality, scarcely seventeen, she was in appearance full ten years more advanced in life. Her eyes were large, but not unintelligent; her mouth wide, but a set of white, even, regular teeth compensated for this defect; her smile was cold and forbidding, and a kind of penetrating suspicion lurked in her dark and closely-meeting brows; her address evinced a scrupulous observance of etiquette, even to fastidious ceremony; but there was none of the natural warmth

of youth in her manner, since every movement, every action, appeared the result of studied thought, rather than natural impulse. It was her constant custom to repeat the questions of her friends word for word, as near the same tone as possible, ere she replied to them, to give herself the opportunity of analyzing the motive for the query, by which the answer might be accordingly guarded. To the Vincents, who were unacquainted with the originating source, this seemed merely an absurd and ridiculous habit, without any meaning whatever; nor could they complain of the slightest deficiency of attention from lady Elizabeth Leslie, who, in even flattering terms, acknowledged her satisfaction at the vicinity of Trent Abbey to Bromley Park, since it enabled her to cultivate a further acquaintance with a family, to some branches of which she had already been intimately known.

Whilst this conversation had taken place, Mr. Vincent accidentally looking through
a glass-

a glass-door which communicated with a small library, perceived a gentleman standing with his arms folded, as if engaged in attentively surveying the visitors; but as he did not at once advance to welcome them, he naturally concluded this could not be the owner of the mansion. But what was his surprise, when the same personage, after a lapse of full ten minutes, putting on a pair of green spectacles, very slowly advanced; and opening the glass-door which separated the two rooms, was presented by lady Elizabeth Leslie as her father, lord Trelawney!—A figure of considerable height, that once had distinguished this nobleman, appeared now bowed rather by indolence than age; features which a physiognomist might have pronounced the most characteristic of candour from their natural form, were now shaded by an expression of contumelious doubt, of subtle lowering misanthropy: whilst speaking, his brow contracted into a frown; his voice, apparently from habit

rather than nature, was hesitating, harsh, and stern; and his quick sharpened gaze never quitted the object, either addressed or addressing: his limbs, thin and emaciated, corresponded well with his saffron-coloured and hollow cheeks, whose large and projecting bones increased the singular aspect of his peculiar countenance: still, neither illness nor grief seemed to have been the assailants. Lord Trelawney wore no borrowed face; abroad, in the spacious crowded hall of festivity, in the domestic circle, the earl was still the same; being, by fits, taciturn and conversable, dull or animated, sullen or spirited, morosely heavy or sarcastically pointed; his laugh was a splenetic satire, his tear, if a tear he shed for humanity, was that of peevish discontent: yet the world pronounced that this noble peer should have been the happiest, the most grateful of the sons of fortune, since propitious fate, by the unexpected extinction of many intervening claimants to the title and domain

main of Trelawney, had secured the earldom and its vast attendant possessions, to the unportioned, the beggared Edward Leslie, at a time when all the miseries of direst abject want had lodged the elegant, the handsome, the fashionable scion of this ancient and honourable house within the confines of a prison. He had, after this event, married a female of assimilating rank, many years older than himself, whose total failure of recommendations, both personal and mental, excited a very natural surprise at the election of the much-courted and then admired Trelawney.

An old fellow-collegian, who was the only being perhaps in creation that, on the reverse of his lordship's fortune, was admitted to familiar and confidential converse, ventured one morning very seriously to remonstrate with him on forming this extraordinary matrimonial connexion, and very gravely expressed his astonishment that a woman, such as Miss Riverdale, could excite in his breast, or in that of any man,
the

the passion of love; to which alone he could impute the intentions of the earl in her favour, since it was evident there existed no interested motive on his side for the union.

To this his lordship as seriously replied, in the following explanatory terms—"I would marry Charlotte Riverdale, my dear sir, because I do *not* love her; and therefore am certain my reason is not blinded in the election. Secondly, I would marry her, because she is too plain and unattractive ever to have had a lover; and being unused to attentions of this nature, will not feel the want of affection on my part, nor have the temptation to desert me for another; nor yet raise a doubt in my mind of the legitimacy of that hereditary offspring, to secure whom I am compelled unwillingly to wedded life. And lastly, I would marry her, because she is very materially my senior; since thus, in the common course of events, I shall not be linked to the burthen for life, but be rid of it

many

many years before the probable termination of my own existence."

His lordship's hopes were realized; and after five years of cold connubial civil disregard, the countess of Trelawney resigned her breath, unlamented, unremembered, save in the peerage, as the mother of her lord's children.

The guests, who had arisen on the entrance of the earl, were again reseated, and lord Trelawney removed the additional optics, with a manner that seemed to say they had performed their duty sufficiently with respect to the present visitors, and that he was satisfied with his survey, at least as a correct one; but whether favourable or unfavourable, his countenance did not express.

Mr. Vincent, conquering his first emotion of surprise at the unceremonious conduct of the earl, commenced with a declaration of having embraced an early opportunity to wait on his lordship, and his satisfaction at learning, from general report,

that Bromley Park was to be annually inhabited, at stated seasons, by himself and family.

“Your information,” returned the nobleman, “is founded on truth; and this is saying more for general report than we can of most things in the world. I have been a stranger to truth the greatest portion of my life, and I value it now, even when I meet it in a trifle.”

“I am happy to find then, my lord, that you greet the stranger in our neighbourhood,” said Florence, smiling.

“Well then, young lady, let us keep to the territory of *truth*, plain unvarnished truth; and tell me what other report connected itself with me, what character anticipated my appearance here?”

“My lord!” repeated Florence, in a tone of some surprise at the singular query.

“Ah! you do not understand me yet sufficiently to give a direct answer to an odd question; but no matter; I will delineate

neate

neate myself, and leave you to give the drawing currency, by aiding its circulation. Of the neighbouring families, yourself and father are the first who have done me the honour of a congratulatory visit on my arrival; and you will doubtless be assailed with many inquiries about the literally *strange* family of the Park; therefore I will assist your replies to the bevy of curious question-mongers. The world of that day when I figured on its boards as Edward Leslie, say, that I attained the possession of rank and fortune with the loss of my wits; and I, on the contrary, maintain it was there I first employed them. My tenants, my domestics, and all-my train of dependants, call me mad; but the more enlightened and refined part of society soften my singular habits into the term of intellectual eccentricity—a modern insanity, that not unusually appertains to the flighty inhabitants of an elevated sphere. I am too careless of giving offence, to wish to do so; that is, I mean no individual rudeness to
any

any one of my acquaintance more than another—they are all alike indifferent; and if particular persons choose to be tenacious and testy, why, I have no grief to throw away upon their folly. I make no endeavour to induce the world to approve me, but I like not to be as they; and I enter into society, because it at times amuses, although it never interests me.”

“Then your lordship must certainly be allowed one of its most *disinterested* members,” said our heroine, who never suffered an opportunity to escape her of playing upon expressions and synonymous terms, for her own amusement.

“You incline to sport with words, I find, young lady, as I do with my own whims; therefore, in your own language, play, and welcome, upon all my expressions; report me, if it please you, the singular man of the Park; Miss Vincent’s talents as a caricaturist, are perhaps worthy of the heterogeneous subject offered for her delineation; colour the portrait highly,
enlarge

enlarge the features, animate the Trelawney canvas, and shew me and yourself off together."

"Yes, my lord; nor fear the canvas being well strained on the board of investigation. For me, I would rather be an historical artist than a mere portrait painter; I would, like the former, seek for cause and effect in the scene of representation, to give strength, feeling, and expression to my sketch. My works should be companionable ones; beneath the first I would write, 'Man as he is;' under the other, 'Man as he was.'"

Trelawney half started at the accidentally but very pointed tone with which Miss Vincent pronounced this last sentence; his brow knit a deeper frown, but it was rather that of reflective thought than resentful displeasure.

Mr. Vincent, who had been occupied in conversing with lady Elizabeth Leslie on different subjects, of answering inquiries as to the society of their new neighbourhood,

hood, now looked towards his daughter, to remind her of the unseasonable length of their visit; but she heeded not the intimation, being wholly absorbed in the amusement of conversing with a character whose novelty entertained her for the passing moment. But the manner of Trelawney became now suddenly changed; memory reverted as to whom Miss Vincent had possibly been indebted for the idea of "man as he was;" and the cold expression of, "he hoped lady Fitz-Arnold was well, when last she heard of her," marked the association of thought in its right channel. He renewed not the thread of conversation, but abruptly rising, without the offer of an apology, returned to the library; and leaving the door open, seated himself at a table, and began writing a letter.

This strange and uncivil conduct hastened the departure of the visitors: the earl made a kind of half bow, without rising from his seat, just to evince he noticed their intention of retiring; while
lady

lady Elizabeth, with extreme earnestness, but no embarrassment, apologized for the very unceremonious conduct of her father, which, when they were better acquainted, they would discover to be but his constant habit, and very far from meaning any personal disrespect, as she knew he would feel gratified by a further knowledge of those whose society she should herself be most happy to cultivate; and thus concluded the first visit to Bromley Park; but the thoughts of Miss Vincent were diverted from dwelling upon its eccentric owner, by the arrival of some friends from town, who came to pass a few weeks at Trent Abbey.

Mrs. Dacre was a maiden lady, who, at an early age, had taken brevet rank, and become the guardian of two orphaned nieces, of tolerable pretensions as to person, and better as to fortune. In the elder, there was an air of conscious self-possession, of consummate effrontery; but it was rather the arrogance of family and wealth,

wealth, than the elation of conceived beauty : the flattery of man interested her not, for in her heart ambition was the sole and undeviating pulse. The younger was femininely pleasing, loquacious, conciliating, and ever ready to render herself affable and agreeable ; encouraging, nay, almost seeking the attention of every fortune-hunter in her immediate circle, for the amusement of eventually laughing at the presumption of those whose addresses she had herself artfully drawn forth ; and yet she affected so much of lively *naïve* candour, that the duped scarcely styled her a deceiver : at first view, all were captivated and delighted ; for Matilda Dacre, while sedulous for the admiration of the other sex, had the prudence not to make enemies of her own ; and she was one of those very few women who are generally approved by both. With all the native ambition of her sister's spirit, she had the art to conceal its influence ; she knew to play her part in life's eventful drama with

many

many untitled lovers, and yet retain her person for coronetted arms alone, deeming a heart an useless incumbrance in the matrimonial quarterings.

Florence often styled Matilda Dacre her town friend, and Ellen Bertie her country friend; yet she rested on the sincerity of the one quite as much as on that of the other; in fact, she imagined the character of the former better assimilated with her own; but if she had analyzed its features correctly, she would have been little desirous of the fancied resemblance. Florence acted from thoughtless inconsiderate vanity; she was the slave of folly, the victim of early dissipation and maternal flattery: but Matilda Dacre was destitute of one virtuous affection of the mind; treacherous, envious, and designing, art crowned the Machiavel trio with a blossoming wreath, that gave the power of invisibility to these pernicious qualities.

CHAP. VI.

———The world, I cried,
Shall hear of this thy deed;
My dog shall mortify the pride
Of man's superior breed.

COWPER.

The Hector of Newfoundland.

LADY Elizabeth Leslie returned the visit of our heroine within the boundary of polite acknowledgment; and without actually conveying an apology direct from the earl, she contrived to intimate that her father never entered into similar observance of etiquette; she also added, that it was her wish this might be generally known in the neighbourhood, that those families who had sought their acquaintance might not

not conceive themselves personally aggrieved by the absence of civility. Further report strengthened the validity of this apology; and as lady Elizabeth evinced every inclination to social intercourse, the singular man of the Park did not deter strangers from paying court to the comparatively more affable daughter, while the young lord Leslie was daily expected from town, at his father's seat; and an accepted dinner-invitation from the Abbey to the inhabitants of the Park, for a day in the following week, revived the ardent hope of Mr. Vincent, that a coronet might yet be the equipoise to steady the wild thoughtless folly of Florence, and induce her to listen to his recommendation of a prudent matrimonial establishment.

A large party had been invited to meet the new inmates of Bromley Park, among which were several officers of the neighbouring garrison; and ere the day arrived, lord Leslie had reached Staffordshire, and

returned a card at the Abbey, to the great satisfaction of Mr. Vincent.

The appointed day of invitation at length proclaimed itself; and the other guests were all assembled in an elegant drawing-room of the Abbey, when the earl of Trelawney and lady Elizabeth Leslie were announced; but the former had no sooner made the first salutation of entrance, than drawing a chair close to the fireplace, of which (it being the month of July) flowers were the sole occupiers, he turned himself directly from the assembled group, and taking a small volume from his pocket, began to peruse it, with an attention that seemed wholly to exclude all thought of surrounding objects. But observation was soon at least diverted, if not wholly absorbed from himself, by a voice, sonorous yet sweet, which exclaimed without the door, as if to a domestic in waiting—"No, no; my name is of no consequence—Hector always announces me;" and at the same

same moment a large Newfoundland dog threw wide the already half-opened door, and rushed into the room.

“ One of the members of Bromley Park, I will be answerable,” ejaculated a young officer, as, together with major Bentinck, he leant over a sofa, where sat Miss Vincent and Matilda Dacre.

“ I have heard of the trite aphorism of, ‘ love me, love my dog ;’ but it seems this is rather, ‘ like me, like my dog :’ ” and Florence rose to receive him of whose approach Hector had given notice, as the rude animal sprang into the just-vacated seat. It was indeed lord Leslie, him whom the fashionables of St. James’s had, the preceding winter, during the short time he remained among them, nominated, “ *Ferdinand the savage.* ”

To a form perfect in athletic beauty, this strange son of a still more eccentric father united a countenance where fine and strong delineated features were flushed by a wild luminous animation, that

gave the most glowing ardency to its contour. The sunny brown of his warm complexion, the ruddy hue of health that tinged his cheeks with manly colour, gave a brightness the most striking to his dark and critically-beautiful eyes: his dress was not peculiar, save the loose-tied cravat, which exhibited the Roman turn of his head and throat, and a small rustic flageolet, which hung suspended round his neck by a black ribbon.

He folded his arms on his entrance, with a singularity which partook of the very originality of grace and elegance, threw an inquisitive glance around on the individuals in the room, laughed at some object which appeared to strike him as ridiculous, and then walked towards his *avant-courrière*—"Well, Hector, is this the seat you have chosen for me?"

The sagacious animal, as if accustomed to the office, replied by leaping down, and thus leaving it for the possession of his master.

"He

“He is a puppy of gallantry,” said major Bentinck, who was an intimate acquaintance of Leslie, “since he has selected for your lordship a seat between two such fair subjects of creation.”

“My lord’s father,” rejoined Matilda Dacre, in a half whisper, “prefers a dumb subject——”

“His taste does not accord with puppies,” interrupted the earl, half turning: “there, lady, you are right, but not in the partiality of which I am accused; for this” (and he raised the book) “discourses most eloquently; therefore is my subject truly a speaking one.”

“Name it, my lord.”

“Woman!” answered Trelawney.

“Loquacious enough then, without doubt,” returned Florence.

“Is it a true bill?” asked captain Warner, a newly-metamorphosed son of the law, who, on the recent death of his industrious father, had stepped from behind the desk of an attorney into a company of the

—— militia—"Is it a true bill?" he repeated, fearing his query should be lost.

"At least it is endorsed as payable in Greece," said Miss Vincent, pointing to the lettered title of the volume, as it was now closed in the hand of the earl, and presented to view, "Woman, or Ida of Athens."

"Very fair," replied Warner; "a great currency of idea, I declare!"

"When you next compliment a lady," rejoined Bentinck, "pray, Warner, let it be in sterling coin."

Here the general attention of the group was diverted by the very audible exclamation of lord Leslie, who was solely occupied in talking to his dog, with serious composure and profound interest; this, with the fixed survey of the eyes of the sagacious animal rivetted on his master's face, as his ear was half turned inquisitively to catch sounds custom had familiarized without explaining, altogether produced so ludicrous an effect, from the
comic

comic figure each displayed, that an infectious laugh spread through the circle.

“Let them laugh and amuse themselves at our expence, my good Hector,” continued Ferdinand, addressing his dog; “it will not take effect, my brave friend; you are dearer to me than all the herd of your quizzers, my fine fellow.”

“And why, my lord?” said Florence, with the affected gravity of extreme astonishment and attendant curiosity.

“Because he is a more active, zealous friend than I ever met with in my own species,” returned Leslie, in a half serious, half ludicrous tone; “he saved my life, and I shall therefore always value his; first, in the natural equipoise of gratitude——”

“Which implies, that you place your mutual lives upon a par, I presume,” said Florence—“But pray, my lord, let us have the anecdote of Newfoundland Hector.”

Ferdinand started from his half-reclining posture, he gently sent the dog from him, and rising with renovated animation, smiled

compliance on the requester; then, with a countenance whose expression was so quaint, odd, and almost indefinable, that the extreme beauty of feature, and magic of native elegance, could alone have sanctioned, he began his little narrative, in a voice whose full, fine, and manly tones, struck upon the ear with a witching force, while his peculiar language was fancifully playful, and yet interesting—"There is a tide, fair nymph, in the affairs of men," says the sweet bard of Avon; and this tide, though it sprang not from the banks of that famed river, but those of the Thames, washed me away in its flood of fortune."

* * * * *

It was manner that gave the little anecdote of Hector and his fidelity full effect; but, reader, that manner is not to be conveyed on paper, therefore might the tale weary rather than amuse: imagine then a very wonderful instance of sagacity, affection, and courage, in one of the canine species, and value poor Hector accordingly.

This

This narrative, embellished by flowery description, occupied the space that intervened to the summons for dinner, to which the Newfoundland hero followed lord Leslie; and stationing himself beneath his chair, was unconscious of the attention his master had drawn upon him, by those talents of elocution which gratitude had excited.

CHAP. VII.

Lest men suspect your tale untrue,

Keep probability in view:

The writer leaping o'er those bounds,

The credit of his book confounds.

GAY.

Henrietta.

SOME days after this party, as our heroine was sitting over the tea-table with Mrs. Dacre, her nieces, and Ellen Bertie, she was agreeably surprised by the entrance of Mr. Morley, the rector of the living of B——, who had been, for some weeks, absent from his clerical situation, and his return had been earlier than expected. Florence received him with unfeigned pleasure, for he was among the very few
to

to whom she conducted herself with consistent urbanity and decorum. The first salutation passed; as the venerable man yet retained her hand, he added—"And now suffer me, after the fashion of my own antediluvian day, to congratulate you on the marriage of your cousin, Mr. Maitland."

"Maitland! Sidney Maitland married!" re-echoed Florence; "indeed, my dear sir, this must be some mistake; it cannot be—it is quite impossible!—Who could have raised so strange and sudden a report?"

"My right reverend friend the bishop of ——, who himself performed the ceremony yesterday by special license, gave me his authority for its actual existence."

"Gracious Heavens!" exclaimed the really-astonished Florence—"And who then is the bride?"

"Mademoiselle d'Estrade."

"What! the mysterious foreigner!" interrupted Miss Dacre; "that poor little

“monster of deformity!” and there was somewhat of even more than her usual arrogance in the speaker’s tone—“Do you not remember, Matilda, she never was called any thing in our *coterie* but the *Lilliput spy*?”

Matilda, who had more policy, if not good breeding, than to thus contemptuously speak of a recently-formed family connexion to one of its branches, and who, although, equally with her sister, she had raised an ambitious hope to the embryo viscount, had the art to conceal her disappointed views, and carelessly replied, she had not the least remembrance of the lady in question.

“Pardon me,” resumed Florence, again turning to Mr. Morley, “that I still am incredulous:” and after a pause, she suddenly exclaimed—“It is quite impossible! no inducement on earth could have influenced Sidney Maitland to have——”

The sentence of the speaker was arrested by her eyes glancing on the figure of Ellen
Bertie;

Bertie; her face was turned from the view of those within the room, as she affected to be attentively engaged in surveying some object without the window where she stood; but the trembling of her form, as it seemed to rest for support against the back of a chair, awakened our heroine to the recollection of her former suspicions, that the heart of Ellen had acknowledged partiality for the suddenly-declared bridegroom. Ever acting by the promptitude of momentary feeling, she embraced the opportunity of her father's entrance and welcome of Mr. Morley, to rise and approach her friend, when, linking her arm within her own, she offered a pretence for quitting the room.

Ellen traced in the manner of Florence, a proof that her secret was discovered; she pressed her hand without the utterance of a syllable, while delicacy repelled the observations of the latter. In mutual silence they reached the dressing-room of Miss Vincent; Ellen threw herself into a chair; her

her cheeks, her lips were pallid, and the shivering thrill of an agitated frame evinced no slight emotion. Apprehensive she was faint, Florence threw up the sash of the window nearest her: Ellen observed the action, and struggled to speak; her voice was languid and uncertain, but her words were firm—"You are wrong, my friend; my recollection is perfect, my senses do not, in the slightest degree, recede—I have, at this moment, their full command; the weakness of an infatuated attachment to an undeserving object, will, I trust, never overwhelm me: the strange, the unexpected intelligence, has electrified me, it is true; I have felt it, I now feel most deeply its power; but let certainty decide the painful conflict: go, my dear friend, learn, by every indubitable proof possible, that *this* event be true, that the new-made husband be indeed our Sidney Maitland. By doubt alone I am agonized, for then my heart still clings to a belief of the reality of that image of excellence it
has

has enshrined ; but once convince me that he I have so loved is false, deceptive, and ungenerous, and the period of his marriage shall be that of liberty, nay, joy to her who has escaped chains forged by unworthy artifice."

Florence hesitated not to comply with this request, from a perfect experience of her friend's character ; there was in it a heroism as distinct from the tender visions of romance, as it sometimes was from rationality ; it was a kind of artificial fortitude, of wild creation, destitute of that mild resignation which should characterize feminine stability. But even this support failed to the unhappy girl ; when the relative of Maitland was no longer a witness to her emotion, love conquered even the imperious despotism that nerved the proud tenement it had usurped, and a burst of tears proclaimed the weakness of humanity.

To escape from the presence of Florence was now the only wish of Ellen, as she
knew

knew this affectionate friend, in the warmth of zealous resentment, would not hesitate to upbraid Sidney for his unprincipled conduct; in the ardour of impetuous feeling, the unguarded Florence would betray the whole extent of that anguish he had inflicted on the victim of his deceptive professions, and Maitland would then indeed be convinced of his triumph over her too-credulous heart. It was this idea, and not the raillery of our heroine, that she feared; well convinced, from a more intimate knowledge of her many amiable qualities, that she had feelings too generously alive to sympathy for the sorrows of others, to suffer even her favourite propensity to tarnish, in such case, the more commendable tenderness of her nature.

She took advantage of the contents of an inkstand which lay on a table in the room, to pen a few lines to Florence, requesting her simply to write the result of her further inquiries. She sealed, and placed it on the table; and putting on her hat

hat and cloak, which she had, in walking to the Abbey that morning, fortunately left in this very dressing-room, softly stole down the stairs, and proceeded at once across the fields to her own abode, which was not above half a mile distant. But what more could our heroine learn? Mr. Morley could only repeat that the dignitary who had performed the ceremony had announced to him that Sidney Maitland, the nephew and heir of lord Shirley, had been united, the preceding morning, to Henrietta d'Estrade, a foreigner, of whose extraction or connexions the bishop, though a relation, had professed himself ignorant, but who, it was imagined, had not been very long in England: that lord Shirley had vainly expostulated with his nephew on forming this marriage, and it was with some difficulty his consent, or rather acquiescence, had been extorted, on finding that Sidney Maitland was inflexibly determined on the union, and agonized at his opposition. With this information Florence

rence was compelled to be satisfied ; but she was desirous personally to communicate it to her friend, that she might soften the effects of a confirmation of treachery in him she loved, so unlooked for, and so unaccountable.

The abrupt departure of Miss Bertie, as well as her too evident emotion, had not escaped the notice of the Dacres ; the elder sarcastically commented on it, while the younger, in a tone apparently the most natural, contrived to display the unfortunate preference of Ellen, by expressing regret for the poor girl's disappointment.

Florence attempted to destroy the impression, by ridiculing the idea, as unfounded ; but still could not succeed. Unwilling, however, to mark it further, she waited the departure of Mr. Morley, and then complaining of a severe headache, avowed herself under the necessity of making an apology for not presiding at the supper-table, taking this opportunity of at once proceeding unremarked to her
poor

poor suffering friend : indeed our heroine felt herself doubly called upon to support the unfortunate girl, for she considered herself in a degree responsible for the present state of her affections, having been long anxious to promote a connexion between her cousin and this favourite companion ; she had consequently sedulously sought to throw them in the way of each other, and experienced a great pleasure in repeating to her father the praises and lavish encomiums Sidney had bestowed on Ellen Bertie, and this, we must confess, from the reprehensible motive of contradiction, since he had been one of the many Mr. Vincent had sought to secure as a son-in-law, and whom Florence had, from a mere spirit of amusement, rather than any dislike or objection to the individual, repelled, by her satiric folly, and reprehensible caprice.

CHAP. VIII.

“What means this ghastly look?

What means that deep-fetch'd groan? Why does despair
Stare through thy haggard eyes?”

The friendly Expedition.

THE clock struck ten, as our heroine crossed the lawn; but as it was a fine summer's evening, and there was a road through the Vincent grounds, immediately communicating to the field contiguous to the cottage *ornée* of Mrs. Bertie, Florence at first felt no alarm at the lateness of the hour. Twenty minutes had brought her without the precincts of her own domain, and she prepared to pass the stile that the field presented to bar her further progress:
this

this effected, she stopped a moment to disengage her muslin mantle from its entanglement in a briar of the hedge; and having completed her release, as she raised her head, in walking rapidly forward to redeem the lost time, she beheld a man cross her path, wrapped in a watchman's Christmas-cloak; a dark-coloured cravat was tied so as to envelop the lower part of his face, while over the upper a hat was slouched nearly to meet the handkerchief, intimating altogether an earnest desire for disguise, that excited suspicions by no means favourable to the object, and consequently gave birth to terror.

The loneliness of this field, the stillness of the spot, and the little habit our heroine was in of walking alone at so late an hour, or indeed any time of the day, being always accustomed to one attendant at least, combined to excite her timidity; and imagination yielding to momentary fears, represented him as some desperate robber, planning injury, if not destruction,

tion, to the passing traveller; when the inspirer of these apprehensions, with a heavy groan, fell at full length on the ground, a few paces from her.

Humanity, and a kind of instinctive terror, now warred as to her flying the spot, or approaching the sufferer; but, on second reflection, she deemed it best to speed to the cottage, and acquainting its inhabitants with the circumstance, solicit assistance for the apparent unfortunate. A second groan, however, more deep and anguished, stayed her steps—"God of Heaven!" articulated the unknown, "is there no power can rescue me from this horrid overwhelming despair? is there no pitying hand to burst asunder the bonds of misery which envelop me?"

The voice struck familiar on the ear of Florence, but her increased alarm overcame the feeble power of recollection, as to whom it proclaimed. Imprudence had ever been a trait in the character of our heroine; perhaps she exhibited it now, though

though clad in an amiable garb, as, taking out her purse from her pocket, with the promptitude of an ever-active generosity, she, half hesitating from tremor, said—
“ If poverty, poor unfortunate, be the misery of which you complain, for a time, at least, this may mitigate your sorrows.”

The figure started up—he darted towards her; and as, alarmed at the sudden action, she sprang forward; and would have fled, he caught her firmly in his arms. Our heroine shrieked, with accents of terror; the unknown half released his hold, yet still grasped her hands, as he wildly pronounced—“ Florence Vincent! good God, what, at this moment, brings you hither?—Tell me, am I discovered? Speak! speak!—But think not it will avail; for, if they drag me back, still will I again break their chains; perjured as I am, I yet will not bow further the slave of fate! I will fly to the remotest deserts of the earth, before these arms shall receive Henrietta d’Estrade as my bride, before that inscrutable

table woman shall be pressed to this heart in connubial love !”

“ Maitland !” exclaimed Florence, as she shrunk from those wild and haggard looks which the moonlight gave full to her view, as his eyes were no longer shaded by the now-removed hat—“ Maitland !” she repeated, “ you alarm, you shock, you confound me !—But,” she added, while a sudden thrill of joy accompanied the impression to which his words had given birth, “ you are then not the husband of this foreigner ?”

With the mournful cadence of despair, he replied—“ Would to God I could confirm that belief ! but the world has already proclaimed it. The rites of our separate religion have both combined to unite us in the bands of wedlock, by a double ceremony of pledging our mutual faith, and yesterday forged the hateful, the accursed chains !—But think not that Sidney is false to love, nor that a demon has had power to turn my affections from angel worth ;
still,

still, and for ever, is Ellen Bertie the dearest object of my affections; and while another claims my hand, my heart is unchangeably hers."

"But if this be really the case, if inconstancy has not actuated the breach of your warm professions of attachment to my friend, what is the strange, the extraordinary cause which has produced this incomprehensible conduct?"

Maitland shuddered; he pressed his hand to his forehead, and in a deepened, but less bewildered tone, pronounced—"The cause, the dreadful, dreadful cause—Alas! this desolate, sinking heart, to that owes a weight of endless misery!"

"But explain, explain, my dear Sidney, at least reveal the actuating circumstance which may plead in extenuation of your conduct to my young friend."

"No, no; revealment must not be: even Ellen will be a stranger to the cause for ever."

"Answer me at least one question. Has
VOL. I. F there

there been any arbitrary exertion of authority on the part of your uncle, lord Shirley, to induce this marriage?"

"No; the whole bent of his influence has been exerted against it: he is, alike with yourself, in ignorance of the motive that compelled me to form this dreadful, dreadful union; the secret rests wholly within my own bosom, and that of her who is my wife:" and Sidney shuddered over the close of the sentence.

"But why then are you here?"

"To seek one last view of her I so fondly love; to breathe a last farewell. I have written a few wretched, incoherent lines, to beg one parting intercourse; and I wandered around the cottage, in the hope of meeting a servant who would deliver the letter direct to my beloved Ellen, without the knowledge of her mother; for I fear she would not admit of her daughter seeing me, who appear to have acted so unworthy a part, by plighting vows of affection, and acquiring the certainty of their reciprocity;

reciprocity, without having come forward in the authorized expectation of the offer of my hand ; but, on the contrary, having deserted the object of many months' assiduous attentions for another, without the possibility of tendering one mitigating circumstance to soften this apparently base and unfeeling procedure. Oh, Florence ! question me no more, lest you drive me mad !”

Sidney paused ; he covered his face with a handkerchief, to conceal the gush of tears that momentarily softened the wilder agony of his soul. He extended the letter to the distressed Florence ; his voice was broken, with sobs of almost feminine weakness—“ Take it, my friend ; your heart, I know, feels for those sufferings whose source you cannot divine : give these few lines to Ellen ; and oh ! in pity aid my last request of one sad and mournful interview ! This altered countenance, these hollow sleepless eyes, this exhausted, harassed frame, shall tell the tale of suffering that has rent

my heart, ere I could induce it to become the victim of calamitous circumstance: these cannot deceive—my well-beloved will feel they cannot; and pity shall soften the condemnation of her wretched lover.”

The mind of our heroine was as much bewildered as deeply affected by the very evident anguish of her cousin; she had not resolution to add to his sufferings, by refusing this earnestly-solicited request, nor had she sufficient prudence at once to discern its impropriety; she therefore undertook the office, by promising to meet him before seven the following morning, in the same spot, and endeavour if possible to induce Ellen Bertie to accompany her; but, if not, to be herself faithful to the appointment.

It was now too late to think of going that evening to the cottage, as Mrs. Bertie, being an invalid, kept very early hours; and Maitland therefore saw her safe within her own grounds, when they separated till the morrow.

Florence

Florence always acted first and thought afterwards, or rather thought and action were seldom, if ever, intimate companions in her mind ; yet as she walked homewards, she began to consider that she had done wrong, in promising to influence her friend to see the husband of another clandestinely, when he was still the professed lover ; but she had given her word to the poor suffering Sidney ; acute feeling preponderated over colder prudence ; and she rose by sunrise the next morning, to execute her commission.

CHAP. IX.

Thou bendest o'er the lover's pray'r

The tearless eye of scorn.

CAMŒNE.

The Farewell.

THE embassy of our heroine proved unsuccessful: once convinced that Sidney Maitland was indeed the husband of another, Miss Bertie suffered no weak wandering inclination to usurp the dominion of her reason; she persisted in refusing to see the being who had appeared thus lightly to regard those professional engagements of affection which bound him to her by every tie of honour and feeling; he had avowed that, even to her, he could attempt no vindication; that the cause would still be unrevealed;

revealed; nor indeed could she conceive any sufficiently weighty to have authorized his desertion in so unexplained a manner.

Of respectable family, of fortune and connexions not elevated, yet moderately good, moving in the first society of her native county Staffordshire, of polished manners and refined education, Ellen Bertie was altogether in a situation to conceive none but honourable addresses could have been meditated by Sidney Maitland; and although the world might have deemed a connexion with the heir of Shirley a highly advantageous union for her, still no smile of ridicule, no expression of censure, could attach to him by a marriage with herself; it might have been deemed an elevation on her side, but it could not have reflected a degradation on his. He had quitted her with even enthusiastic expressions of love; and he had contrived to intimate that he only left her to pay the respect to his truly parental uncle of soli-

citing his sanction, ere he came forward an avowed candidate for her hand.

Many weeks had passed since this last interview, so precious to Ellen, over whose remembrance she had hung with a fond and firm hope in the future, since of lord Shirley's consent it was evident that Maitland had no doubt. The fifth week had commenced since his departure from Staffordshire; still Ellen saw not, heard not of her so recently-devoted Sidney; and the intelligence which then first reached her, was the direful news conveyed by Mr. Morley, of the marriage of lord Shirley's heir with the foreigner d'Estrade.

In mute despair, the wretched Sidney received the final resolution of Ellen Bertie, never again voluntarily to meet him, and her perfect contempt for, as well as incredulity of, his present professions: his letter was returned unopened, with a request that he would never again address her in language which, as a husband, his wife should now alone claim.

Florence

Florence dared not soften the reply of her friend to her cousin ; she could not but respect the firmness of that propriety which dictated it, and therefore saw the necessity of its delivery, however cruelly felt by the object.

For many minutes, Maitland appeared lost, even to himself ; the severed hand of the preceding night was cold as the icy chill of death, when it now pressed that of our heroine ; his voice was mournful, yet composed, for in its tone there was a saddened steadiness—" My thanks, Florence, are sincerely yours, for the interest you have evinced towards my unhappy self. Did she I love know all, had she witnessed my unfeigned sufferings, she too might have evinced more of tender sympathy, and less of proud indifference. My heart seems turned cold to all ; its sufferings have frozen it to marble, till it can feel no more. *Reason* dictates the answer of Ellen, *Love* inspired the wish of Sidney ; yet she is right. I dare not upbraid, but tell her

that England no more beholds me, unless the grave shall envelop her who bears my name : then, and then only, can I return—Flight is my last refuge. Yet more, dear compassionate friend ; tell her that Henrietta is as much the object of my inveterate detestation, as she herself still is of my devoted love. Mutual hatred has ruled the unnatural compact of our disastrous marriage ; nor has either hesitated to avow it to the other.”

With a brother's chaste embrace, Sidney threw his arms around the weeping Florence ; he pressed her hands affectionately within his own, then looked towards the cottage of his Ellen—he staggered back, the word “farewell !” faltered on his deathly lips, and he veiled his eyes with his hand, as if to conceal the abode of his well-beloved from his view, ere he had resolution to tear himself away from its precincts.

It was a trait in the character of Florence, to lose all sense of the offence in the consequent affliction of the offender ;

the dishonourable conduct of Maitland, even levelled against her dearest friend, became extinguished in the recollection of that deep and anguished suffering which had overwhelmed this inexplicable man. As a brother she had long regarded Sidney; she had both esteemed and admired him as a pleasing and animated companion: indeed, had she not highly approved him, she would never have sought to aid and encourage an attachment between him and Ellen Bertie, for whom her affection was unbounded: tears of regret coursed down her cheeks, as she thought on the disastrous fate of these unfortunate lovers; and perhaps there were not two other beings in creation for whom Florence could have felt thus warmly on a subject which had always been the theme of her ridicule; for on love she had never seriously reflected. Yes; that Florence, who, in all the coquetish wiles of triumphant beauty, could unhesitatingly laugh, sport with, and torture the feelings of her own enslaved admirers,

admirers, by conduct the most unjustifiably provoking and inconsiderate, wept for the lover of another: and such is too often the inconsistency of woman's enigmatical heart.

As she re-entered the gate of the lodge, our heroine encountered major Bentinck just alighting from his horse, to fulfil a breakfast-engagement at the Abbey, which had been given him by Mr. Vincent the preceding day, unknown to Florence; and Horace having resigned the horse to his servant, they walked on together.

What intuitive impulse is that which renders us so anxious to conceal the tenderest tribute of sensibility? why is it that the most genuine proof of an amiable heart is conceived an unworthy weakness, and that even feminine excellence struggles to repress the tears of sensibility?— Yet have I seen a child weeping over the death of a favourite cherished bird, the object of juvenile attachment, retreat from observation, and seem to dread the smile
of

of ridicule, the imputation of folly, for evincing its own susceptibility of tenderness in the first bud of youth!—Florence as hastily effaced the tears of sympathetic regret for her unfortunate relative, on the first view of Horace; but her smile was saddened, her laughing eyes had ceased their gaiety.

A man whose whole soul is absorbed in an individual attachment, never thinks of, never beholds the object of his idolatry, without every idea pointing to love; every thing around takes the complexion of this passion; and the melancholy expression of Florence's countenance, so unlike her usual appearance, seemed to Bentinck as of necessity to have its origin in this sentiment; while jealousy was not slow in magnifying the impression.

At any other time, our heroine would have been amused in thus exciting the apprehensions of a suspicious lover; but coquetry was, with her, only the concomitant

mitant of exuberant spirits, of thoughtless unchecked vivacity; the latter damped, the stimulus to this entertainment failed; and she felt more inclined to be angered than flattered at the forced laugh of the jealous soldier, while, in affected *badinage*, he attempted to convey the new-raised idea, and yet conceal its painful effect.

For the first time in her life, Florence was serious in her manner of contradicting a jealous surmise; and Bentinck was, for that reason, the more convinced of there being ground for his suspicion. With the ready aptitude of a victim to this self-tormenting passion, he thought her earnest disavowal of his conjecture proceeded from a fear of discovery, which evinced more actual attachment than all her former open declarations of approbation and interest for any of his rivals, which she had often assumed merely to torment him, when, in fact, she was equally indifferent to all.

The

The change of her manner, so sudden and so great, he thought must have some powerful cause; and love was, to Horace, the most potent in its effects.

CHAP. X.

Trust not to that—

Rage is the shortest passion of our souls ;

Like narrow brooks, that rise with sudden show'rs,

It swells in haste, and falls again as soon ;

Still, as it ebbs, the softer thoughts flow in,

And the deceiver, Love, supplies the place. OTWAY.

The truant Lover.

FURTHER *tête-à-tête* conversation was interrupted by the appearance of lord Leslie leaning on the arm of Mr. Vincent, the latter having encountered his lordship in a morning ramble, and persuaded him to join the breakfast-party at the Abbey.

Never had Miss Vincent been so silent in society ; a depression hung over her spirits:

spirits she scarcely made an effort to subdue. Lord Leslie took his seat on her right hand, as she presided at the breakfast-table; and Bentinck was on the other side of her, next to Matilda Dacre.

But if poor Florence was reserved and depressed, never had the major been more loquacious or spirited, so much altogether the man of gallantry. Matilda, however, and not our heroine, was now its object.

Florence beheld this with surprise, if not more; she could have been entertained, nay, have laughed at and enjoyed his sudden transfer of attention, had she believed her own coquetry had given rise to it; but conscious that she really had acted with candour and propriety, she viewed with discontent and resentment that inconstancy in another she herself had too often displayed. She was unhappy, and Bentinck was gay; she was destitute of inclination to trifle, and he was all levity and folly: there was an unkindness in the lightness of his present manner, in this disregard of herself,

herself, at a moment when he had but just avowed that her distress was fully observed.

The spirits of poor Florence were at no zenith for retaliation ; in truth, she was rather hurt than angered ; for all the softer, more amiable feelings of her disposition, had been that morning awakened. As she sat mechanically dispensing the tea, she became suddenly sensible of the steadfast survey of lord Leslie ; and even Florence, with all her habitude to the admiring stare of fashionable hundreds in a crowded public assembly, felt her colour deepen at the very peculiar and analyzing look of him whom the indiscriminating members of *haut ton* had styled an uncultured, "savage ;" because, as a very admired and reigning belle of the last season had affirmed, he looked untamed, genuinely said all he thought, animadverted strangely on every one's failings, had not one fashionable idea, and was different from all the civilized world of St. James's. Miss Vincent had, however, sufficient understanding to
judge

judge for herself, and not to be blindly led by an opinion that had become popular, and gained a herd of proselytes, merely because she who first circulated it was herself an object of too great celebrity not to give consequence and validity to all she uttered: and it is thus that, in the higher world, a character is too often bestowed on an individual, when the inscription is both erroneous and preposterous.

Florence was inclined to believe the eccentricities of Ferdinand affected, if she could have discovered a motive for their exercise; and his natural understanding, which now and then broke through them, like the sun piercing a misling rain, appeared too excellent to admit the conclusion that they had been adopted, as many follies are, from the sole wish of distinction, upon any ground. Puzzled by her own surmises, she therefore left their analysis to time, that great solver of enigmas.

From the wide-spreading metropolis of our isle, down through each lesser place of
public

public resort, there is always to be seen, during every season, an oracle for the female, and an oracle for the male world, in the line of *haut ton*. The selected idol belle is allowed to decide authoritatively on dress, on theatrical merit, on musical composition, on a popular novel or a local poem, and on the rightful comparative pretensions of all the beaux in her sphere. The man of first-rate *ton* and intrigue, is, of course, the other oracle: he pronounces on female beauty, operatical singing, finest studs, best bred pointers, rival princes, the manager's dirge and contract, victory, or any other mania of the day which may arise: and woe be to those young adventurers in life's gay and mazy circle, who have not received the suffrage of these important personages!—Merit availeth not in the region of fashion—*interest, patronage*, are the toll of that bridge which supports us over the waters of pleasure to the throne of celebrity.

Lord Leslie, it may be said, was too independent

dependent in worldly consequence, both from rank and wealth, to need either interest or patronage; but he had, by refusing homage to the charms of lady Ann Spencer, offended this renowned oracle of that winter when he first appeared in town; and she experienced retaliating satisfaction in depriving him of all personal pretensions to admiration or attention, save those he owed to that birth and fortune of which she could not divest him. But the opinion of her ladyship, or indeed that of society in general, appeared wholly indifferent to lord Leslie; and while at times displaying the most solid judgment, and the acute penetration of a more advanced age, he would, at others, suffer his understanding to be wholly lost in an attachment to those boyish sports, and juvenile amusements, which had better become his earlier years; for he seemed to part from the pursuits of childhood with reluctance, nay, regret. At an age when most youths with avidity feel themselves privileged

leged to enter as members of the great world, as partakers of its pleasures, lord Leslie approached it with an indolence to seek them, and a dissatisfaction, when courted, to embrace them; yet his spirits were great, free, and unfettered by one cloud of affliction; his laugh was uncourtous, frequently unlicensed; he appeared even to affect this, merely to evince his perfect disregard of what might be thought of him, and a determined resolution to amuse himself in society in whatever way he deemed best, heedless of the contempt, the anger, and reproof that could assail him from the indiscriminating crowd: he was always at his ease, the most *degagé* creature of every party; there was generally a degree of happy cheerfulness enthroned on his open brow, and a mischievous smile, too playful for malevolent intent, yet so archly intelligent, that it breathed a full consciousness of the absurdity of his own character; and there was so much of candour in the pointed satire,

or

or the whimsically personal allusion, mingled with an untutored, spontaneous elegance of appearance, idea, and manner, that gaye, at times, to Florence's mind, no unapt illustration of Nature's graceful, uncultured "savage;" while his contradictory appearance, at others, left her doubtful where properly to class him. His intellect occasionally displayed itself with even brilliant force; but, like the flashes of lightning which issue momentarily from an overpowered atmosphere, and, by their evanescent lustre, only render darkness doubly visible, so lord Leslie, by the sudden illumination of matured and refined genius, but rendered the successive indulgence in boyish mirth the more remarkable.

We have, however, wandered most unjustifiably from the blush of our heroine at the marked survey of his lordship, to this singular young nobleman himself, and must now return to the original subject.

Lord Leslie had remarked that blush,
and

and immediately added—“Forgive me, Miss Vincent, if I have annoyed you; but you have heard I am a strange and unfamed being.”

“Gentlemen seldom accuse our sex of being *annoyed* by admiration,” said Mrs. Dacre, with marked emphasis.

“Miss Vincent, my dear madam, is too much accustomed to admiration, to mistake for it mere investigation,” was the reply of Ferdinand—“A physiognomist ought to look before he judges.”

“Yes,” returned Florence; “and the trial of a physiognomist is, like that of a judge without a jury, too apt to depend on individual partiality of opinion, or caprice. But the verdict, my lord; I pray you, the verdict: I may surely be permitted to inquire the result of that investigation so candidly avowed to have been made?”

“Can you bear the language of truth, fair lady?”

“What, my lord! yourself at a loss to determine

determine that important *trait* of character!—Ah, poor Lavater! what a disciple hast thou given us!—But tell me, shall I speak as the defendant or the plaintiff? for truly I think I may style myself both.”

“Rather become a cardinal virtue, and personify Justice balancing the scales between the two, and thus give the rightful answer,” returned Leslie.

“Well then, I would rather be punished with a new-created penance, than pursued by a worn-out pleasure, which implies, that I like dear novel *truth*.”

“And proves also,” rejoined Ferdinand, with an arch mischievous look towards his friend Bentinck, “that you, Miss Vincent, would never like any thing in creation that was not inconsistent.”

Florence coloured; the inference at this moment provoked her.

Leslie continued—“And you blush at folly, yet embrace it in your every action!”

“A blush, my lord, we are told, is the

symbol of partiality; therefore, to blush at folly is perhaps the most striking proof I love it," said our heroine, affecting not to conceive the equivocal remark of Leslie in its double meaning.

The party rose from the breakfast-table as she spoke, but neither of the gentlemen were inclined to take an early leave. As Florence moved her seat, the chair of lord Leslie again was its neighbour: our heroine felt inclined to be rational; she forgot the intimation of her father in regard to this young nobleman, and never less anxious to shine, she was more pleasing, from being divested of that strained exertion to excel, which so often defeats its own interest. While Bentinck still continued the assiduous flirt of the voluble Matilda, lord Leslie had entered into a long and by no means uninteresting conversation with our heroine, who was astonished to find her own faults and frivolities freely commented upon by his lordship, yet in so playful a *gaieté de cœur*, that she felt far more inclined

clined to be entertained than angered ; for most sincerely she laughed at her own portrait, as he whimsically drew it with all its motley imperfections. Yet his eyes spoke something of admiration that his lips did not confirm. Florence smiled as she observed it, and further saw it was remarked by Bentinck, who, to her infinite gratification, she beheld fretfully tearing a card in pieces, which he had unconsciously taken from the table, while watching herself and Leslie in a reflecting mirror, as, with his back turned to them, he affected to be wholly absorbed in listening to the conversation of Matilda Dacre.

Florence had insensibly become animated ; she was now yet more inspirited ; and untying a cluster of exotic flowers that a domestic had just brought in for her arrangement in some Egyptian vases, she threw the whole quantity over a table, and called upon lord Leslie to assist her in the employment.

Ferdinand now reassumed his mischievous air, caught up a few of the most beautiful, then twining and intertwining the stems, notwithstanding the assurances of Florence that he would utterly spoil her choice *bouquet*, contrived to form them into a wild kind of wreath, and throwing it round the neck of Hector, proclaimed him the laurelled hero of Greece, while, with boyish mirth, he surveyed his work. But the luckless ornament, like most of the decorations of fame, had some unfortunate thorns mingled with the flowery mead, which were productive of more pain than pleasure to the canine favourite; and anxious, at all events, to disencumber himself of a votive offering, to which his sagacity did not point as valuable, but rather a troublesome, unpleasant appendage, he essayed, by many an antic gesture, to throw off the incumbrance; and at length not succeeding, he rolled himself, in an agony of distress, in the train of Florence's
ever-costly

ever-costly dress, the delicate texture of which unresistingly yielded to the rough attack, but still without aiding the efforts of Hector in his own release. Half in terror at the wild grimaces of the animal, and half provoked at the uncivil, uncourteous laugh of lord Leslie, who was rather inclined to be amused with the circumstance than to relieve her distress, she felt gratified when Bentinck, hastily advancing, effected her escape from the entanglement of Hector's new style of collar in her gown; and she then, half angrily half laughingly, inquired of Ferdinand, what could have instigated him to behave so barbarously?

“A whim of the moment,” was rejoined; “I wished to see an exemplification of Hayley's *Serena*, in the mild, the gentle, the timid, unassuming *Florence*. But, in truth, I thought the zone would yield: however, no matter; a little female anger heightens the complexion and animates the eyes; nay, even a *Kate* has had her admirers:”

admirers:" and then, without a single apology for his conduct, hastily took up his hat, and with a general bow, quitted the room.

CHAP. XI.

How short the anger of a lover's mind!

How weak a succour, disappointed pride ! COLLIER.

.....

Thus woman—

Not least an actress when she least suspects ;

Yet Nature oft peeps out, and mars the plot ;

Each lesson lost, each poor pretence forgot,

Full oft, with energy that scorns controul,

At once lights up the features of the soul. ROGERS.

Youth, Love, and Folly.

“WHAT contemptible absurdity!” exclaimed Bentinck, in a pettish ebullition of resentment, that could display itself in no other manner than by attacking the folly of his lordship ; nor had Horace now the power

to wholly conceal the passionate fire of his irritable disposition.

“A kind panegyric on an absent friend,” said Florence, who had now rallied her spirits, and determined to probe that heart which had dared an effort to turn towards another.

The major coloured at the cold rebuke; friendship at this moment, with him, played indeed but the second voice to outraged love: yet Horace execrated the jealousy that bowed the nobler feelings of his breast, while in vain he struggled for emancipation from its odious toils; for there is in fact no passion which so completely subjugates dignity of character, even in the most estimable. Horace mentally acknowledged his error, and was anxious to retrieve it, as he replied—“It was not the character of my friend which I thus condemned, for that I highly regard; but it was merely the assumed sport of the passing instant. Lord Leslie had, by his preceding conversation, evinced he was equal to somewhat

somewhat more than childish puerile mischief."

"What then, you heard his conversation? Now, how could that have happened? I thought we were quite *tête-à-tête*, *sans* auditors, *sans* spectators. But, my dear Matilda, why will you allow the major to be thus uncivilized, in avowing he really listened to the discourse of a gentleman when a lady was at his side, all the agreeable and all the entertaining?—A soldier, and not play the flirt better! *un militaire*, and surrender your character to the term *gallantry*, in its double signification!"

"Nay, have mercy on the deserter," said Miss Dacre; "although the poor knight has dropped the colours of his dulcinea, it was but a stratagem of Cupid's war."

He who sighs, and turns away,

May live to sigh another day;

But he that in love's strife is slain,

Will never fail to sigh again."

"Ah!" rejoined Florence, "Hudibras-

tic sighs just suit me—I never breathed any other in my life.”

“ Love is sometimes exhibited in *tears* as well as sighs,” replied Horace, fixing his darkly-jealous eyes full on the countenance of Florence, as he made this allusion to the sorrows of the morning.

“ Perhaps so,” she carelessly returned, enjoying, from a motive of revenge, the too visible distress his countenance proclaimed. Then taking up one of the modern lutes, she sang, in the sweetest manner possible, the beautiful little composition of, “ *Said a smile to a tear.*”

Florence was no proficient on any instrument; with natural talents to acquire either, the versatility of her disposition had caused her to wander from the harp to the piano, from the piano to the lyre, from the lyre, by regular degradation, even to the trifling tambourine; but the patent lute of our fashionists being merely calculated to display a graceful attitude and a fine arm, together with the happy effect of
reviving

reviving our ideas of Italian heroines in seraphic-breathing romances, at the trouble of little tuition and less talent, was just the instrument for a conscious beauty, more especially when Nature had given a voice too sweet and melodiously-expressive to offend the most fastidious amateur, since taste and harmony supplied the place of execution.

The song concluded, Miss Vincent gaily rose, and condemning her own carelessness in having left the lute in an opened window, where the damp had injured the sound, she turned the lock of a door communicating to the music-room, with an intention of consigning the instrument to its proper situation. Bentinck eagerly seized the opportunity to follow, under the pretence of assisting her. The melody of the few preceding minutes had resistlessly hushed the more angry passions; and as he tenderly pressed the hand which resigned it to him, he repeated—"The lute is indeed the instrument of love."

"And of harmony also, I have heard," said Florence, laughing.

"Let it indeed be so," rejoined Bentinck, "and suffer those witching smiles to seal my pardon; say at least, my Florence, we are friends."

Miss Vincent did not speak, yet her countenance was to Horace an eloquent volume; but whether his was a right reading, we cannot pretend to determine: his arm, however, half encircled her waist, as, perhaps with more affected than real reluctance, she sought to extricate herself from the retainer.

"Beloved, adored Florence!" exclaimed the ever-impassioned lover, "how is it that I idolize even your very faults? how is it that in you alone, of all women, coquetry becomes fascination?"

"Well, but that is very uncivil of you to tell me I have faults," said our heroine, in the ridiculous tone of a spoiled child.

"My *friend* Leslie is only privileged to do that," rejoined Bentinck; and he laid a particular

a particular stress on the term *friend*, as if to stay the jealousy that again half arose at the recollection of his lordship.

“ Oh ! *he* is quite welcome to discover them ! ” replied Florence, in a tone of more nature than she had ever before displayed to Bentinck.

The speaking exultation of his eyes, the joyous flush of his illumined countenance, told to our heroine the manner in which her recent declaration had been taken ; but in fact the speech had no intentional meaning similar to that which was attached to it by the major : yet there was a wild fluttering at her heart, that succeeded to the increasing warmth of the look, the language, and the manner of Horace, and which rendered her strangely embarrassed ; there was something altogether so new in her present feelings, she scarcely could divine whether they were painful or pleasing : the flippant *badinage* was fled, not to be commanded ; and her eyes turned, distressed and overpowered, from the ardent admiration

admiration of his. Thus, if Leslie did not compliment her on the triumph of temper, Bentinck thought, fondly thought, he traced that of love in the new-born confusion of the blooming Florence. But Miss Vincent, resolving to conquer a tremor for which she could not account, the next minute started from him, with a playfulness ill affected; and was in the view of the inhabitants of the next room, before Horace could prevent her flight.

Although the *tête-à-tête* was thus abruptly interrupted, Horace still lingered, in the hope of an invitation to pass the remainder of the day at the Abbey; but his expectation was disappointed—Mr. Vincent was now fully absorbed in another prospect of aggrandizement for his daughter. Bentinck, however, once desired as a son-in-law, was now only to be detained as a kind of convenient lover, to bring forward a more advantageous one, by the dextrous stimulus of jealousy; and the politic father thought, by leaving his daughter, in

this instance, to the free indulgence of her own disposition, she would favour his plans, without being herself conscious how far she was in the road of that filial obedience she had hitherto amused herself by violating, from caprice alone. Poor Horace was, therefore, compelled to take his leave long before the dinner-hour, and returned to mess, to be quizzed there on his failure of appetite, his absence, and thoughtfulness, with all the correspondent symptoms of love's bewitching fever.

The Dacres had, in the course of the morning, gone to visit a friend a few miles distant from Trent Abbey; and on the departure of the major, Mr. Vincent took his gun, to threaten devastation to the winged tenants of his manor; while Florence was left to solitude and love, yes, actual love, that worst of punishments which can befall a coquette. How grievous to vanity, to pride, to feel that the heart, which has thrown its fetters around a myriad of captives,

tives,

tives, now draws back the lengthened chain, firmly linked upon its own!

“Why surely,” thought Florence, as she threw herself into a seat in her dressing-room, “surely I cannot be so ridiculous as really to feel a very decided partiality for the attentions of Bentinck? To be in love with a jealous tyrant, who would not let me speak, look, or, if possible, be looked at by any eyes but his own! Heavens! to be the slave of such an odious man!—But then, on the contrary, how humiliating is the idea of not being capable of inspiring these doubts and fears that keep alive a lover’s flame! To have a being who does not heed with whom I dance, converse, or flirt, oh! how dull, vapid, and insipid!—Jealousy, on the other hand, is such an everlasting source of amusement and interest, it would preserve one’s husband from sinking into cold torpidity, or arrogant security. Husband! gracious Heavens! could I have identified Bentinck as a husband?

Why,

Why, my father must, of course, think he had terrified me into obedience by the bugbear *poverty*, like a child complying with the humours of his nurse, lest threatened Neptune should carry him off to his marine abode, for being rebellious to sage authority !”

Thus reflected, if reflection this folly might be styled, the young and beauteous heroine of our memoir ; and the result of her meditations ended in a firm determination not to be in love ; and to prove it, a further resolution to treat the unfortunate Horace a thousand times worse than ever : then drawing her chair towards a toilet, and seating herself before the mirror, she attentively contemplated her own countenance, and thought her dress particularly becoming ; for Bentinck had said, she never had looked half so lovely : but, in the midst of her sudden partiality for the Turkish robe, the luckless rent met her view, and threw her into all the pettish fevered anger of a too much indulged temper.

temper. In vain her abigail presented dress after dress for her dinner attire, Florence found fault with all, and condemned poor Barnard for she knew not what ; then threw from her the varied trinkets that lay on the toilet, careless of injuring the delicate baubles ; and in the end taking off the luckless robe, desired Barnard to have the mischief repaired in time for her to appear in it at dinner. In vain the obsequious waiting-woman offered her remonstrance ; the darned gown would not be fit for a lady to wear ; and she was certain hers had never been seen in such a shocking thing, and could never put it on, if the mischief were ever so neatly repaired ; and as to being ready by the dinner-hour, it was quite impossible for the work to be done by that time.

Florence, now become still more provoked by an opposition to which she had never been accustomed, was peremptory, and in a fit of truly puerile passion declared, possible or impossible, it must be
done

done by the hour specified ; thought Barnard intolerably impertinent, and wondered how she had so long suffered so idle a creature to remain in her service.

Barnard, who knew well to bow to the humour of her young mistress with the slavish humility of a sycophant dependant, and which mode of conduct she had always practised, ventured to expostulate no further on the subject, but offered another dress, in the forlorn hope of diverting this new whim. Florence looked at it, blushed, and then turned pale ; she silently received the gown, and in a softened tone, desired the abigail to leave the room. Alas ! this very dress reminded her not of her own lover, but that of her friend ! the Maltese ornaments which decorated it had been a gift of Sidney Maitland but a few weeks since : her thoughts were now, therefore, directed to a far different channel. Never had Florence felt so humiliated at herself ; the crimson of shame dyed her cheeks, at the sense of her own unkindness towards,

towards, and neglect of her long-regarded companion ; but contrition paled the flush with its most painful effect—"Poor Ellen!" she exclaimed, "how unworthy am I of the name of your friend! I am no longer only thoughtless, unreflecting, and fretful, but caprice has rendered me despicable and selfish!—Bentinck," she added, and at that moment of self-reproach, with sincerity, "I hate you; for it is you who have made me forget the claims of friendship, pity, and humanity!"

The first dress that now met her hand was readily accepted, the hat and cloak were soon adjusted, and Florence was descending the stairs to proceed to the abode of Mrs. Bertie, when she was stopped by a servant delivering a letter from Ellen herself, which was hastily opened, and it was found to contain these few lines:—

"My dear friend will
not impute to any unkindness or disregard,
the

the wish that prompts me to avoid her presence for one short week; during that time, it is my earnest request that you, my dear Florence, will not seek to see me, nor expect me at the Abbey. If you deem it *necessary* that I should be acquainted with any of the conversation which passed this morning, inform me of it by letter; and when next we meet, let us consign the theme to lasting oblivion, as, by that time, I trust that, even in thought, it will not disturb the serenity of

“ Your obliged and affectionate

“ ELLEN.”

This letter was a kind of relief to the conscience of our heroine, since it evinced her absence from Miss Bertie had been rather desired than regretted. An answer was promptly dispatched; and the return of the Dacres again obliged Florence to descend from her dressing-room.

Cards of invitation were in the evening received for an entertainment at Bromley Park,

Park, to celebrate the day when lord Leslie would reach the important age of twenty-one—an æra generally anticipated with such ardent hope and joyous ecstasy, yet but that epoch which may turn the young and elate heir from happy pupilage to independent woe; for then a thousand harpies of destruction gather around their prey; at this momentous period, the guardian chain that bound him within the domain of prudence, is loosed, and sycophantic, interested, and abandoned companions, gather around, and extend the most fatal temptations, to lure the inexperienced and the sanguine youth, who, high in the first flush of independance and unrestrained wealth, rushes with fond expectancy on the deceptive-loving world; nor contemplates that gulf which may yawn to envelop him in the last abyss of vice and profligacy. Yes; parents, relations, friends, all concur to deck this event in the party-coloured vest of varied festivity; fashion sanctions; nay, demands the gay
orgies

orgies of this most important natal anniversary; and serious thought, if perchance it would obtrude, is hunted from the mind by the overwhelming chaos of wild irrational amusement: even the singular misanthropic earl of Trelawney complied with this general custom; and that same pride which had professedly induced him to marry, to perpetuate the ancient race of Leslie, stimulated him now to grant his heir all the customary *eclat* of worldly consequence.

CHAP. XII.

For still I try'd each fickle art,
 Importunate and vain ;
 And while his passion touch'd my heart,
 I triumph'd in his pain. GOLDSMITH.

.....

“ Here Vanity assumes her pert grimace ;
 The mind still turns where shifting fashion draws,
 Nor weighs the solid worth of self-applause.”

The Coquette's Resolve.

IF we were regularly to detail the frivolous conduct pursued by Florence to major Bentinck, during many successive weeks, we fear we should depreciate her too effectually in the estimation of our readers, to render them interested in her future fate :
but

but if jealousy degrades into the most unjustifiable and contemptible weakness, the creatures of man's imperious race, so coquetry plays a similarly despotic part in that of woman. To tease and torment, we fear, is considered but the meet privilege of beauty; and Horace, with the absurd inconsistency of a too personally-enslaved lover, flattered, and consequently fostered, those very foibles that threatened his own peace. He was not, he could not be blind to the excess of vanity that reigned triumphant in the bosom of our heroine; but he sought to render that vanity subservient to his own success; for he believed, by evincing the full devotedness of that attachment she had inspired, to gain access to her heart through its weaker portal. Thus it is that men, naturally the most imperious in other matters, are the greatest slaves in love. For a time, Bentinck had struggled with the chains that fettered him; but the moment which had given to his ardent imagination the impression that the

attachment was mutual, had subdued it un-resistingly: it was then he yielded to the full influence of its sway, and bowed his lofty spirit, with an unworthy subservience, to the caprices, the whims, and the follies of its mistress, with all the mad idolatry of passion. Florence but too readily discovered her triumph, and with ungenerous exultation, marked her heightened influence.

Mistaken Bentinck! those follies you sought to flatter into allies to your own cause, became but nurtured and armed enemies, who too fatally knew their own power!

Our heroine, not insensible to her own faults, however unwilling to amend them, conceived poor Horace most effectually lost in the depths of love, when he could blindly recognize them as attractions: believing she might, at any time, throw the olive branch, if entwined with the myrtle, and be secure of its acceptance, she became careless and indifferent to please him
already

already gained ; she thought now fearlessly to trifle and luxuriate in all the delusive witcheries of that coquetry, which, as a wife, she might be no longer at liberty to indulge. Horace was a convenient lover she could throw off and recall at pleasure, a *dermier* resource, perhaps to save her from the mortifying appellation of Mrs. Florence Vincent, the *ci-devant* beauty, who had outrun her day of admiration, and was at last justly left in single blessedness, to weep the frequent *no*, and mourn occasion past away ; exhibiting, through each varied stage of life, a temper spoiled by indulgence and a misguided education : she might hereafter exist but as a living memento of “ *the follies of woman.*”

Yet, however error marked the course of the capricious mistress, as a friend, Florence was still sincere, tender, and affectionate ; poor Ellen was not again forgotten ; and the expiration of the week of required absence beheld her at the cottage of Mrs. Bertie. But her daughter was no

longer there; she had set off three hours previous for Brighton, and had left a letter for Florence, simply intimating that she regretted the sudden arrangement of her journey had precluded her from taking leave at the Abbey, but that her mother would explain the cause. In fact, Mrs. Bertie had little to explain, except that two intimate and valued friends, in passing through Staffordshire from the north, had spent a day at the cottage, and given so pressing an invitation to Ellen to pass a few weeks with them at Brighton, whither they were then on their route, that she felt anxious to accept the proposal; but somewhat, it must be owned, against the wishes of Mrs. Bertie, to whom even this short separation was painful: she had, however, not negatived the desire of Ellen, and the excursion was consequently embraced.

Mrs. Bertie, however, had concealed until now that she was not a little hurt at the evident anxiety of her daughter to join a gay party to a place of public amusement,

so

so very unlike her usual attention, when she must, in consequence, leave her mother alone, at a time when her health was much impaired. But Florence thought she discerned the real motive, for which Mrs. Bertie knew not there existed any ground: our heroine concluded that Ellen was apprehensive lest her mother should discover the extent of her attachment to the mysterious husband of Henrietta d'Estrade: she doubtless considered that the solitude to which the ill health of Mrs. Bertie at this period compelled them, was most calculated to nourish and foster an unhappy hopeless love, it now became her pride as well as principles to surmount; she perhaps fancied there was more of heroic firmness in forcibly tearing herself from scenes yet too dear to memory, and risking the present displeasure of her mother, than eventually to torture that maternal bosom with the discovery that an only and beloved child was a victim to the remediless misery of a reprehensible and culpable

attachment, founded on error, and existing in defiance of reason. Ellen Bertie was not of a disposition to act a simply rational part; and by at once revealing the source of her conduct to her mother, and candidly avowing a resolution to exert every effort to subdue a now-dangerous inclination of affection, gain a friend and adviser in the dearest of relations; no, Ellen must play the heroine in principle and in action: the propriety of common custom did not embrace sufficient of elevation to satisfy her mind; she aimed at being great rather than good; she considered the latter, without the union of the former, a sort of pusillanimous rationality, that could not engage her attention and pursuit.

Such was the opinion of Florence on the subject of Miss Bertie's so abruptly quitting her mother, at a time when it perhaps would have been far more *reasonably amiable*, had she resigned her mind to filial attention, and as a first consideration,

devoted

devoted herself to the care of an invalid parent, rather than giving an attachment to a faithless lover the importance of conceiving it more praise worthy and exalted to attempt the subversion of this misplaced regard, by flying to scenes of gaiety, from which her heart sincerely revolted ; and if Florence, from a long and intimate knowledge of the disposition of her friend, judged aright, surely the conduct of Ellen, in this instance, may also be numbered among "*the follies of woman.*"

Miss Vincent returned home, discontented and displeased with the coldly-worded farewell lines of her friend ; and she hated the very idea of being in love yet more, in the conviction of its having rendered Ellen Bertie so forgetful of a tender and affectionate mother, so wholly indifferent to her friend ; for Florence thought that Miss Bertie deemed it heroic even to write thus coldly, from the circumstance of her being a relative of Sidney Maitland.

But while thus time had passed, and con-

tinued to pass rapidly on, lord Leslie remained an almost diurnal visitor at Trent Abbey: he was always a ready attendant on Miss Vincent, in her parties, both abroad and at home; and her society ever appeared to him a resistless magnet of attraction; sometimes gravely teaching her chess, at others playing *Corinella*, and with boyish mischief suddenly throwing the shuttlecock out of the window: then again rallying her most unmercifully on her reprehensible conduct, lashing her faults with a severity that, on reflection, astonished her, for the temerity of him who, so recently a stranger, yet presumed thus openly to condemn and arraign her; still, even at the moment, anger was impossible, for his strictures evinced so much of truth, point, and playful candour, that they were rather calculated to amuse than irritate, if they answered no better purpose. His satire was that of gay and happy youth, not of premature misanthropy; he loved to indulge himself in a laugh at the ridiculous;

lous; but this was neither to display his wit nor his observation, for vanity he had none; too good-humoured to be splenetic, he was too high in the buoyant flush of juvenile spirits, to be a grave or wary censor; and the quaint conceit of the critique often excited the smiles of his auditor as much as its subject. His understanding was too natively penetrating, to render him an easy dupe to the meretricious pleasures of dissipation; for while, all candour and sincerity himself, he could discern the stratagems of the hypocrite, or the wiles of the syren; and no deceptively-brilliant garb, however alluring, could array vice with one charm for him; he had perhaps his errors and his foibles; but they were, to use a borrowed simile, as spots on the sun, which its own brightness rendered the more visible.

CHAP. XIII.

“ And is it thus, in courtly life (he cries),
 That man to man acts a betrayer's part?
 And dares he thus the gifts of Heaven pervert,
 Each social instinct and sublime desire?
 Hail, poverty! if honour, wealth, and art,
 If what the great pursue and learn'd admire,
 Thus dissipate and quench the soul's ethereal fire.”

Political Friendship.

AND here it may perhaps be proper to trace the source of the strange sentiments and conduct of the earl his father; but they, in fact, took their rise from events in his life, when, as he himself expressed it, he had figured on its boards as only Edward Leslie. He was the eldest son of a respectable

table clergyman, who evinced more of virtue in his practice than ability to disseminate theoretical doctrines; for he lived so bright an example of Christian excellence in the sacred character, as might have shamed its more learned professors. At his death, a property of ten thousand pounds descended to Edward, who, a perfect novice among the haunts of men, repaired to London, and was received with professions of the most cordial interest and affectionate friendship by a late fellow-student, who had recently embarked in the mercantile line: he painted to Leslie, in lively colours, the benefits arising from commercial intercourse, and was anxious to enrol him as a partner in the firm of his house; but Leslie's wishes and his talents were wide as the poles from the pursuit of trade; yet he readily acceded to the second proposition of this kind friend, who offered to receive his ten thousand pounds, which committing on his behalf to the funds of the house, would secure to the lender his

proportion of profits, without any trouble, or the appearance of his name as a partner. Edward considered this offer as a strong proof of the interest his friend felt in his behalf; and as this flourishing house, he was assured, cleared above double the usual per centage of the public funds, he, without a moment's hesitation, committed his all to this his first and dearest friend.

Three months only had our novitiate basked in the resplendent sun of what, to him, was ample independance, when bankruptcy overwhelmed the house in whose concerns he had committed his whole property; and the disappearance of his liberal friend, with not only this trust of confiding simplicity, but so much more of cash collected by various means for that purpose, that the poor defrauded Edward received, as a creditor, only two thousand from his ten. With this remnant of his fortune, which he had that morning been paid, he was taking a solitary dinner at a chophouse in the city, better suited to his finances than his

his inclinations, when he was accosted by a man who had once held a commission in his own county militia. Happy to meet with a human being he had known in those days of peace and content, when, as a boy, he had been permitted to wield the major's sword, or decorate himself, and march over the lawn with his sash or gorget, he received the extended hand of recognition with a new sensation of pleasure. They took their meal together; and after they had emptied their single bottle of humble port, without either expressing a wish for its renewal, major Ellis, with a melancholy smile, invited him to take coffee with his family at Kensington. Glad to get rid of reflection, he readily consented; and as they passed a stand of coaches, hailed one, upon which the words, "Kensington stage," invited their entrance.

On stopping, the coachman having liberated them, they ascended the steps of a small house; and knocking at the door, it was opened by a rough-looking man, who

5 clapping

clapping the major on the shoulder, exclaimed—"Welcome home, sir! These here ladies wanted to fob us off with saying as how you was gone to get a friend to help you; but says I——"

"Do your duty, Mr. Higgins; I do not wish to hear your observations," replied the major. "You will find my family in that room, Mr. Leslie, and I will follow immediately."

Great was the distress and astonishment of Leslie in seeing the house thus beset with bailiffs, which the greeting of Mr. Higgins announced; while Mrs. Ellis and her two daughters exhibited a scene of misery from which his heart recoiled. He approached the former, and tenderly taking her hand, inquired the cause of a sorrow so unlooked for, of present appearances, and the arrest of the major, which had so immediately followed their arrival.

Amid sobs and tears, the afflicted fair one explained, that, disappointed of a sum of money, for the payment of which he
stood

stood pledged, he had that morning gone into the city, in the forlorn hope of meeting a friend expected from the country, who would have assisted him in the present emergency ; but as he had returned without him, she concluded he had been disappointed in his expectations, and hence the scene which had followed.

At this moment major Ellis entered the apartment, and with a melancholy smile, taking the hand of his wife, exclaimed—
“ Exert your fortitude, dear Jane ; the die is cast, and your husband this night sleeps in a prison.”

“ Not if I can prevent it,” cried the liberal-hearted Edward—“ What shall I do to assist you ? You know my entire ignorance of these matters, therefore direct me ; for what little is in my power, the distresses of yourself and family may command.”

“ Twelve hundred pounds, my dear Leslie, is a large draught upon your friendship ; true, it is but a temporary loan, yet per-

haps it may inconvenience you to transfer it to my necessities for a month : at the end of that period, I expect to be fully released from all my embarrassments. But the demand is too great, and I must reconcile these dear connexions to the calls of justice—It is but a short separation.”

“ The separation shall never take place—I can command that sum instantly ; and the return, if it be within three months, will not, I assure you, affect my convenience.”

The agitated females wept their thanks, and the reprieved major Ellis was happy enough to see the bailiffs dismissed by a cheque on the bank of —— for the twelve hundred pounds. The now-happy party sat down to their coffee and cake, with lighter hearts than either had felt for many weeks. Leslie accepted the offer of a bed for that night, but, the next morning, returned early to town, after having promised his friend to dine with him on the following Monday.

As poor Leslie had made the discovery that a man cannot appear as a gentleman in the metropolis, and indulge in all those comforts of life to which he had been accustomed, upon the interest of his now-limited fortune, he at length determined to purchase a small farm in the country, and by living within his means, once more aim at attaining the haven of his wishes—independance. A neat cottage, with a small portion of land annexed, soon offered itself to his wishes; and the bargain being struck for eighteen hundred pounds, to be paid down, matters were instantly agreed upon, and he pledged himself for the money in four months to be forthcoming: the writings were in a few days signed and sealed, and the philosophic Leslie looked forward to his future rural life at least with content. On Monday, he recollected his engagement with major Ellis; and as the now state of his finances admitted of no better conveyance, he stepped into a stage-coach once more, and reached Kensington
a few

a few minutes before the appointed hour. The door was opened by an old lame man, who inquired if his name was Leslie? On being answered in the affirmative, he put into his hands the following letter:—

“ DEAR LESLIE,

“ UNTOWARD circumstances have compelled me to serve you a scurvy trick; but, in truth, ‘ necessity has no law;’ and you will be ready to add, conscience neither, when you have heard all. But the fact is, that imprudence and unlicensed extravagance had so considerably reduced my slender finances, that absolute ruin and a prison for life appeared all that was left me, when accident threw in my way just such another open-hearted greenhorn as yourself, who lent me the money for which I was at that moment under fear of arrest. With this sum gained by his credulity, I was returning home to my really-distressed family, when I stum-
bled

bled by accident on you at the City Chop-house: my invitation was certainly not a disinterested one, though I did not mean to pilfer your purse to so large an amount as was afterwards the case; but knowing that your fortune was a very comfortable one for a bachelor, and seeing you so deeply affected by appearances at Kensington, I thought a cool twelve hundred would wonderfully assist in my scheme for emigration, and therefore suffered you to arrange with Higgins and his gang, reserving that sum which was already in my pocket, for traffic in some other quarter of the globe.

“ I have been thus candid, to convince you that all steps you may incline to take, either for securing me or your money, are alike ineffectual; long ere this reaches your hand, I shall have bade a last adieu to England. The old man who will deliver you this, is the owner of my late house at Kensington; he knows nothing of me, and

and consequently will be unable to answer any inquiries you may be inclined to make. Adieu.

"Remember me,

"JAMES ELLIS."

After the perusal of this letter, we can no longer style Leslie the "philosophic;" for rage certainly burst the bonds of justice, when he abused the unfortunate lame man as an accomplice in the plot to ruin him. Half frantic with the certainty of a misfortune he had no way anticipated, he immediately repaired to the house of Mr. Simmons, the late owner of his cottage, and placing the letter of Ellis in his hands, candidly confessed his inability to fulfil his engagement, and ended by requesting that the agreement might be cancelled.

The incredulous smile of Mr. Simmons astonished him; he coolly replied, that he was perfectly satisfied with *his* bargain, though it was now apparent that was not
his

his case; that the scheme might answer extremely well with some, but that he was not to be thus evaded.

Protestations were vain; and at the end of the four months, totally unable to discharge his obligation or to dispose of his farm, the unfortunate Leslie found himself within the walls of a prison. Here he had languished for some months, when memory placed before him another whom he still called *friend*; and to Mr. Emerson he addressed a letter, stating his present situation, and requesting his aid to liberate him; pledging himself, if possible, to restore the sum advanced in the course of two years: and having dispatched this letter, he waited in anxious suspense its result.

He was one morning informed that a lady requested admission to his apartment: much astonished at the unexpected circumstance, he requested she might be admitted, when Mrs. Emerson made her appearance. The confusion of poor Leslie was great; but

but this momentary embarrassment was soon relieved by the friendly interest his fair visitor exhibited on his behalf. She announced herself as deputed by her husband, who was unavoidably called out of town at this unlucky moment, to assure him of his readiness to afford him effectual assistance, and to make every arrangement for that purpose without delay. The grateful heart of Leslie bounded with emotions which did honour to human nature; but Mrs. Emerson checked his endeavours to express them; she assured him they were too painful to herself to be acceptable, and therefore begged they may be no more recollected; and after a visit of considerable length, she at last bade him adieu.

Several successive interviews appeared necessary for the adjustment of the preliminaries; and Leslie began to wonder that Emerson should have committed such a transaction to the hands of his young and beautiful wife. But the farce soon drew to a close—the lady, in unequivocal terms, proposed

proposed an elopement: as the price of his liberation. She talked of a long-concealed attachment, of her vain attempts to eradicate it; of the wretchedness of wedded life, where love formed not the cement; and lastly, proved to him her possession of a large independance, to support them in affluence on the Continent.

The astonished Edward shrunk from the shameless wife with horror; to a woman so lost he conceived remonstrance unavailing, and therefore contented himself with assuring her, that to injure so benevolent a friend as Emerson, in so tender a point, was what both heart and soul revolted from; and coldly recommended her not only to return to a sense of what she owed her husband and herself, but earnestly requested she would no more expose either to animadversion by again condescending to visit a poor prisoner.

Disappointed in her attempt, Mrs. Emerson then proceeded to assure him that his
opinion

opinion of her *honourable* husband was ill founded, and that circumstances alone could have compelled the communication of an agreement which, she now confessed, had been entered into between them from a mutual wish for emancipation; he, to obtain a divorce, which would enable him to marry his ward, and she from a desire to shake off matrimony altogether.

Our unsophisticated Edward shuddered at these pictures in *réal* life; he thanked Mrs. Emerson for the honour she had done him, but as his affections could not be commanded, he begged leave to relinquish the former offers he had accepted under far different impressions; and consequently was left to ruminate at leisure upon those effects which had flowed from his adherence to the paths of rectitude and honour. However Conscience accorded her plaudits to the track he had chosen, still the dreary prospect of a prison for an uncertain term, exhibited to his mind's eye
but

but a melancholy perspective, which each succeeding hour decked in yet more gloomy colouring.

One day that he sat wrapt in pensive abstraction, he was suddenly aroused by the entrance of Mr. Bently, a distant connexion of his family, with whom he had spent a part of the preceding summer under the same roof, at the house of a mutual acquaintance; half sick of the world, he scarcely felt a sensation of pleasure, when he was cordially shaken by the hand, and greeted with strongest professions of friendly interest. Soon, however, ashamed of his reserve to him who had sought only to succour him, he once more slowly unfolded himself from the taciturnity he had adopted, and to the commiserating ear of soothing sympathy, he delineated his sorrows and their source.

Bently professed his extreme gratification at the smallness of the sum for which he stood committed, and retiring for a few hours, returned only to release from the

house of bondage his dear and valued relative.

The heart of Leslie beat responsive to the voice of friendship ; he cordially shook the extended hand of Bentley ; and together they repaired to a neighbouring coffee-house, where they passed a cheerful, if not a happy evening. The next day they had arranged to spend together ; and on the third, our late prisoner had consented to accompany his friend into Gloucestershire, where a lawsuit of the latter required his presence.

In the course of their journey, the conversation, more than once, turned upon the subject of the cause which was now at issue ; when Bentley, by indirect and circuitous means, at length ventured to hint that he hoped his dear cousin recollected the particulars of a conversation at which he had been present during the period they had passed together some months since in Derbyshire, as it was a matter of considerable consequence to him that he should do so ;
but

but that, even if it had escaped his memory, he could himself give him so accurate an account, as could not fail to revive it. Our novice professed total ignorance of the whole affair, while Bently proceeded to the detail of particulars. Again and again did Leslie express, with *naïve* surprise, a failure of memory, so uncommon with him, as not a single trace of the repeated conversation lived in remembrance; when Bently, in a half angry tone, exclaimed—"Well, that is not very material, as I am convinced of your reliance on my veracity. The conversation I allude to *did* take place; and as you are subpoenaed on this trial by my lawyers, I have liberated you for the purpose of attendance. I expect, I desire, in fact I will receive no reimbursement for what I have done on the score of money matters; but with regard to this trifling affair on hand, all that is required of you is to make oath of all I have repeated; and your corroborating attestation of the circumstance will confirm the

statement already made, and produce a favourable issue to my cause."

"Such an issue," replied Edward, "would be highly satisfactory to me, from the interest I must feel in your concerns; but as I really cannot trace a single sentence of the asserted conversation, you will not expect me to assert upon oath a matter which finds no place in memory."

Bently, however, did expect it; he did more, he condescended to the most abject supplications to the astonished and petrified youth; he offered him a considerable share in those spoils to be secured by *bearing false witness*, and laboured to convince him that no possible detection could take place; as it was by no means an uncommon circumstance.

With horror inexpressible, he spurned the offered bribe; and with indignation expressed in strongest terms, quitted the presence of that man who, but a few hours before, he had conceived his disinterested benefactor and friend. Freed, however,
from

from a prison, he began to think of the means of repaying the unworthy Bently for the advance he had made for that purpose, as he revolted from the idea of remaining indebted to that man he at once despised and abhorred. Jews and money-lenders rejected with derision the promises of our honest ignoramus, who had neither house, land, or *post-obit* bond to offer; and half frantic with the forlorn prospect reason and common sense opposed to the flights of imagination, his intentions, by persevering industry and economy, to obtain it, or his reliance on opposite contingencies; for although he was fully committed for the appearance of the money at the specified time, for the silly bargain he had made with regard to the farm, and in case of failure, the forfeiture of the deposit-money, yet the law did not deem it so confirmedly *his* property, as, under such circumstances, to enable him at once to dispose of it.

Almost rendered desperate by the pres-

sure of circumstance, in one of his usual wanderings he encountered a man whose only fault was said to be his addiction to play. A resource here appeared to offer itself for the relief of one under his appalling circumstances; and without the hesitation of a moment, he hinted to him his situation, and the sudden wish he felt to commit himself to the blind guidance of Fortune.

His companion smiled at the term; he assured him *Fortune*, blind as she was admitted to be, was not so lavish of her favours as was generally impressed; but that, as he was a man in desperate circumstances, if he implicitly submitted to his directions, the golden shower would soon envelop him: in short, that as death had broken in upon their fraternity, and snatched from the band a veteran in the service, and detection had recently banished another, that the personal recommendations of gentlemanly manners, plausible appearance, and high connexions, were all in his favour,

Leslie

Leslie might enrol himself in their list, and he would undertake for his initiation in *the mysteries of the gaming-table*: two well-feathered *pigeons* were already in their toils, and he would instruct him in the art of assisting to pluck them.

Sickened with such successive instances of human depravity, our young novice became misanthropic; he fled the haunts of men, and shut himself up for a season in retired seclusion. Necessity, however, once more drew him forth; and an affair of love, of purest, tenderest love, in which all his hopes of happiness were buried, drove him at length a voluntary exile from his native shore; and on the Continent he was for a length of time lost to our view, until he suddenly again burst forth like a second earl of Westmoreland, although, with him, not the *thirteenth*, as was the case with the former, but the fifth removed in succession to the peerage of Trelawney.

But circumstance and the misfortunes of life soon united materially to change the

original character of our young noble; his temper became soured, his mind a ruin, and his affections thrown back upon himself; from mistaken impressions, his knowledge of human nature had scared those refinements of feeling to which he had once been but too sensitively alive; yet his heart was not callous, nor had it ever been corrupted in any degree by the vicissitudes of his own life. His habits were now certainly eccentric; his suspicions always on the alert, and equally careless of the censure or plaudits of the multitude, whom he despised, he lived but for his son, to whose education he had devoted himself; and although he had failed to imbue his mind with jealous suspicion, yet it had certainly become tinctured with cautious fear and dread of imposition, while his daughter imbibed but too readily the darker shades of worldly policy.

CHAP. XIV.

Ah ! little think the gay licentious proud,
Whom pleasure, pomp, and affluence surround ;
They who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth,
And wanton, often cruel, riot, waste ;
Ah ! little think they, while they dance along,
How many feel this very moment death,
And all the sad variety of pain !

————— how many drink the cup
Of baleful grief, or eat the bitter bread
Of misery !

THOMSON.

The Child of Poverty.

THE attention of Florence was, in an early day of the following month, arrested by a message from the wife of the porter of the lodge, on behalf of an indigent and distressed

tressed stranger, whose situation having excited her own compassion, she wished to extend the aid solicited into more able hands, and had therefore made the appeal mentioned ; as, amid all the faults and follies of Miss Vincent, the neighbouring poor, even to an extensive circle, had been in the habit of receiving constant succour from her hand : this had been, it is true, indiscriminately lavished ; and although we must acknowledge that a few unworthy objects had appeared at different times amid the group, yet much oftener had the oppressed child of misery been rescued from want, and cherished by the hand of our really kind-hearted heroine ; although her charity had not been marked with that distinction which such acts demand. But while her thoughtless, gay, and vivacious temperament led her rather to seek the haunts of pleasure than the realms of poverty, yet the pursuits of the former were frequently relinquished for the claims of the latter ; and when the petitions of dis-

tress really reached her, the ready boon was promptly granted; and relief, under every possible form, issued from the coffer of affluence, which, from early infancy, had been open to her wishes, and but too often, even to her caprices. Encouraged, therefore, by past success, Mrs. Hanson felt confident in her present appeal; she gained immediate admission at the Abbey, and at once entered upon her simple tale of woe.

The present petitioner was a young foreigner, of the name of Agnes Dursley, who had been most cruelly and unjustly ill-treated by a very near relation of her own, but whose disposition was represented as mercenary and arbitrary in no common degree. This woman, of the name of Williams, was at the head of a small seminary in a neighbouring town; and had engaged, at the recommendation of a Mrs. Mills in London, to whom she had written expressly for that purpose, the identical young woman now at the lodge, as her sole assistant;

but as the terms stipulated for were very inconsiderable, it had been understood that if, upon her arrival, any objection on her side should arise, Mrs. Williams was, in that case, to defray the expences attendant upon her return. It however so happened, that, in the interval of time which must necessarily have arisen between the adjustment of the agreement and the arrival of the intended preceptress, a more economical arrangement had been made with another of less pretensions: the unfeeling governess had taken advantage of the unavoidable delay of a day, to render her engagement void; and not only refused to admit her for even one night beneath her roof, but had also denied to her urgent necessities the loan of a single guinea.

The benevolent Hanson, then a visitor to her more opulent relative, beheld with indignation the triumph of power over the distressed and unfortunate foreigner; she heard her plead the rights of humanity, she heard her implore, with streaming eyes,

eyes, the protection of her roof for only a few days; she heard her in vain proclaiming the expenditure of her last guinea, from the certainty of having reached her future asylum, and with all the eloquence of terror and of misery, petition for the means to sustain existence until she could hear from her London friend, her good and excellent Mrs. Mills; the governess was alike deaf to all, for they included the certain risk of what was dearer to her than the welfare or even the life of the young female before her; for mercy, the divinest attribute of Heaven, had no place in her callous bosom; while that of her more humble visitor throbbed with suppressed sympathy for the weeping girl. She boldly undertook her cause; but the result may easily be anticipated—Miss Dursley was thrown upon the protection of her advocate; and after a scene of severe altercation, the now still-more-wretched foreigner having witnessed herself the means of an apparently irreconcilable disagreement between

between the aunt and the niece, was invited by the former to accompany her in an instant departure for her lowly cot at the gate of Trent Abbey. The poor girl gratefully accepted the offered succour; and weighed down by the recent unpleasant scene of which she had been the innocent cause, together with the severe disappointment she had experienced in the loss of the situation she had looked to for recruiting her beggared purse, nay more, for securing the means of independance, that dearest boon of indulgent Heaven, she had sunk into a state of hopeless despondence, which her kind friend had endeavoured in vain to arouse her from. The virtues of Miss Vincent were expatiated upon; the theme of her beauty, her accomplishments, her benevolence, was exhausted; still was the weeping stranger unmoved, uninterested in the detail.

They had reached the lodge, and Mrs. Hanson having professed, in return to the reiterated acknowledgments of gratitude which

which flowed from the lips of her companion, that the greatest proof which could be given would be her partaking of the frugal contents of the three-cornered cupboard, which consisted of cold beef, bread, and a bottle of old October, from the Abbey, which she had placed upon a table before her, then carried into effect the resolution she had before formed for her benefit, by paving the way for an introduction to her dear young lady; and leaving her to profit by her counsel, she, without further delay, set off herself for the Abbey.

The requested interview immediately took place; Mrs. Hanson's tale had more than rested on the ear of Florence—it had reached her heart, and she felt already convinced that the unfortunate foreigner merited her attention; but when the eager narrator added a florid description of her beauty, her elegance, her innocence, and her gratitude, curiosity, or perhaps a more laudable incentive, induced her to request
that

that the stranger might immediately be introduced in person.

The delighted Hanson lost not a moment in the execution of her commission : with a light heart and as light a step, she retraced her way to the lodge ; and hurrying on the bonnet and cloak of her astonished guest, bade her lean on her arm, if she felt tired ; and as they went along towards the Abbey, it would be quite time enough to tell her the particulars which led to her admission there.

The quiescent Agnes obeyed ; for, greatly exhausted by mental suffering, the powers of her mind had sustained almost a total suspension, and she became a passive machine in the hands of her new friend. Soon, however, was she aroused to a sense of existing circumstance, when she discovered that all respecting her history which had come within the knowledge of Mrs. Hanson, was already in the possession of at least one inhabitant of the Abbey. She felt the awkwardness of appearing before
strangers

strangers under present influence ; her eyes red and swollen with tears, her travelling dress soiled and divested of its original neatness, her mind agitated and disordered by recent events, with the full consciousness of the unceremonious obtrusion of her lamentable story upon the ear of her who, from never having herself felt the heavy pressure of such calamities, would, she erroneously concluded, deem her at best a bold and confident mendicant. Trembling beneath these united fears, she entreated the liberty of postponing the dreaded interview until the morning ; but Mrs. Hanson was not to be checked in the full tide of joyful expectation, and Agnes saw the necessity of acquiescence. The free circulation of air, however, speedily removed those traces of sorrow which were lately so legibly written ; the exercise had restored a small portion of her native bloom ; and, when the folding-doors had closed upon her entrance at the Abbey, she felt somewhat more assured at meeting
its

its mistress, than she could have supposed possible but half an hour before. In a few minutes she received the cordial greetings of the dreaded Miss Vincent: youth and beauty were not those appalling repellants which imagination had conjured up to terrify her; suspicion lurked not near the graceful Florence; ever ready to rest securely upon the decision of her own judgment, and equally prone to pronounce on first appearance, the native personal recommendations of Agnes carried their full weight to the mind of Miss Vincent; and she was perfectly satisfied, at the first moment her eyes rested on the blushing countenance of the fair foreigner, that she had encountered only undeserved misfortunes, and was prepared favourably to receive whatever account she was inclined to offer as their source; nor, for even an instant, pondered on the possible deception which might have been invented to throw the beautiful stranger upon her protection and bounty; such an impression never entered
her

her sanguine mind: and as she surveyed the blushing girl before her, imagination realized the heroine of her little romance as all that was estimable, all that, as a future companion, she could wish to find. The manners of Florence, that native urbanity which seldom is seen and not felt, were now successfully exerted: the drooping foreigner soon felt her courage renovated; she was conscious of the delicacy observed towards her, in the suppression of that curiosity which it was impossible to suppose did not exist; and as early as decorum would permit, begged permission to relate those circumstances which had united to place her in her present dependent state. The rising sigh, the starting tear, bore testimony to the auditor of her truth and her worth; she commiserated that humiliation to which the recital acknowledged her bowed, and would readily have suppressed every desire she felt, to save those pangs she conceived it would inflict; but Miss Dursley negatived the permitted

permitted silence, and with timid faltering voice expressed her conviction of the necessity of the proposed communication. Florence bowed in silence, and the foreigner thus commenced her narrative:—

“ I am by birth, madam, a Portuguese, as were likewise my parents, who both died before I was eleven years of age; when I became the adopted daughter of my mother's youngest sister, resident a few miles distant from the German Spa, and the widow of an Englishman. Of my family and connexions I know but little, except that they were once of high consideration in Portugal; but had, by means of political influence and court intrigue, become involved in disgrace, and eventually in beggary. But the history of the sorrows of my aunt bore, I was taught to understand, but little resemblance to those of my parents, for they were wholly of a private nature; yet she never adverted to her native country without shuddering; and whenever even the recollection of it recurred

curred to her mind, it would blanch her cheek with horror, and even agitate her whole frame: and having often witnessed this extreme and painful emotion, it deterred me from imposing it by any of those inquiries which would otherwise naturally have arisen respecting my Portuguese relatives. Still the whole sum of her affliction seemed rather to rest on the past events of her own life, than to have originated, or even been augmented, by the fate of my parents, of whom she never spoke with any peculiar warmth of regard; she certainly sincerely mourned her husband, but there was rather a gloomy despondence than pious resignation expressed in the deportment of the sorrowing widow: her mind was, at times, distracted, unsettled; and she often sent me from her, as if she dreaded my witnessing those mental agonies which still I not unfrequently observed overwhelmed her; but again she would recall me, and lavish on me much of what might have been conceived even maternal

maternal affection. Living in perfect seclusion, our wants scarcely exceeded the necessities of life: but although, I think, not more than seven years my senior, her mind was richly cultured with all the acquirements of an extensive education; and to me she strove to impart a share of her knowledge, carefully attending to the more useful as well as elegant branches of tuition; but this was only at those periods when her mind was most composed.

“ From my first being received beneath the roof and protection of my aunt, I was invariably called, both by herself and our domestics, by her name; and we passed by the English appellation of Mrs and Miss Dursley. With the language of the country we resided in she was perfectly familiar; but having taken indefatigable pains to instruct me in that of England, we were soon in the habit of speaking no other when together. The sufferings of a surcharged bosom concealed within its own folds, at length produced the effect I dreaded—

dreaded—they preyed successfully upon the spring of life; and she at length fell a victim to the ravages of consumption.”

The voice of Agnes faltered, her eyes overflowed with the tears of grateful affection, and the break in her narrative took its rise in too sacred a source to be interrupted by her sympathetic auditor.

“It were a vain attempt,” at length continued Agnes, “to paint my sorrows, my sense of my own helpless and forlorn situation;” and again she paused.

“And was there no being to whose care and attention this kind friend could bequeath you?—But doubtless there was, and this individual was in England?”

The Portuguese struggled to subdue that grief which impeded articulation to the answer of Miss Vincent’s query—“Yes, to one friend she did most strongly recommend me, a banker in London, of the name of Bagley, whom she mentioned as at once the friend and agent of my late father; and that, in a cabinet in her chamber, I should

should find a sufficient sum of money to defray present attendant expences, and bear myself and servant to England. To fill the latter situation, she enjoined me to retain one who had been more particularly my own, and who was affectionately attached to me; but, alas! from poor Benedicta strange and cruel events have unfortunately separated me!—On the day preceding my aunt's death, she delivered me a letter, which, on her actual demise, I was, without loss of time, to have conveyed as directed: the name of the addressed was d'Estrade."

Florence started—"D'Estrade! Henrietta d'Estrade!" she involuntarily repeated, naturally struck with the union of name and country.

"Yes, madam," she returned, while surprise at the interrogation marked her features; "yes, madam, by that appellation I have frequently heard my aunt mention her. But do you know her? or can you tell me where to seek her? for the receipt
of

of the letter has never been, as was desired, acknowledged to me; and I am therefore led to doubt if it has ever reached her, as my aunt professed herself by no means sure of the correctness of the address."

Miss Vincent hesitated, and at length added—"Be good enough to wave an immediate reply to your question, and if I do not trespass too far on you, inform me in the interim of all you know or have ever heard of the person you have mentioned; for to me it is a matter of some interest."

"I have no personal knowledge of her whatever," returned Miss Dursley, "and am in fact as ignorant of her or her connexions, as I am of those of my own immediate family. It is true, I have often, very often, heard my lamented aunt pronounce the name with a wild and even agonized emotion that has terrified me; yet I also remember that she spoke of her as a once dear and bosom friend, and shed

the sadest tears, as she told she had been the companion of her early years."

"Mrs. Dursley then held her character in much esteem?"

"I certainly drew that conclusion," replied Agnes—"it was the most natural; and under this impression, it is doubly painful that I have no means to discover her present abode; for she is the only being upon earth to whom I feel I have any right to turn with the confidence of succour and assistance; for, as the adopted daughter of her early friend, she surely would not regard me with indifference."

"I trust not," replied Florence, musing; "and if she be really the lady I allude to, which is surely more than probable, from the union of two names, coupled with that of the country to which they attach, she has amply the means both to befriend and protect you; for she is recently married into one of the most respectable families in England. Her present name is Maitland,

land, and her husband is heir to lord Shirley."

"Maitland!" re-echoed Agnes, and a confused recollection seemed to pass over her mind.

Florence surveyed her in turn with surprise—"The name of Maitland seems to rest on your ear with some interest: are you then acquainted with its possessor, Miss Dursley?"

"No; but, in a frightful delirium that attached to a fever under which my aunt suffered soon after I lived with her, I perfectly remember with what nervous strength she invoked that name; and calling upon him to forgive her, exclaimed, in wildest accents, that his mad ungoverned love for her had undone him."

"Perhaps then," said Florence, "he was the man she mourned?"

"Oh no!" returned Agnes; "no, it was always evident that the whole bent of her affections were devoted to her deceased

husband—he was the sole object of her love ; and this she had ever professed.”

“ Where was the letter directed which Mrs. Dursley delivered to your care for Henrietta d’Estrade ? ”

“ At the convent of St. Jago, in the environs of Lisbon.”

“ And to this letter you have as yet received no answer ? ”

“ None ; and I now resign all hope respecting it, as I conclude she must have left Portugal before it could have reached that place, from the report you make me of her being so recently in England. Since, therefore, this is probably the case, I must immediately seek her, and make known my friendless situation. But, alas ! I have not now the means of reaching her but by letter, from the reduced state of my finances.”

Florence hesitated not a moment in her offers of pecuniary aid. The grateful Portuguese acknowledged, in warmest terms, her sense of the obligation ; but, ere she
incurred

incurred further debts of kindness, begged permission to give the sequel of her little history, in order to remove any possibly unfavourable impression which her present circumstances might have created, from her unceremonious dismissal from the house of Mrs. Williams. An engagement, however, which Miss Vincent had already obtruded on, prevented her from listening to the remainder of the story which waited her attention; therefore, recommending Agnes to return with Mrs. Hanson to the lodge, she signified that, on the morrow, she could command that leisure she wished to afford its recital: but Florence had, with her accustomed thoughtlessness, forgotten that that morrow was to be devoted to the festivities of Bromley Park, and a second must arrive ere she should be at liberty to turn her attention to the narrative of the Portuguese. Miss Vincent was, however, sincerely interested for the forlorn Agnes; and independent of her having excited compassionate feelings in

the bosom of one at once both willing and able to assist her, the mention of Henrietta d'Estrade was calculated to induce Florence still further to investigate the history of Miss Dursley, since she hoped it might tend to elucidate somewhat respecting that fatal foreigner who had been so strangely united to Sidney Maitland, and might possibly cast a light on the motives of his at present inexplicable conduct, in that singular and ill-starred marriage which had wrecked the happiness of the credulous and attached Ellen Bertie, who certainly had been most cruelly and ungenerously deserted.

Maitland was now in his thirty-first year, an age when he could not even claim the poor excuse of extreme youth in extenuation of the capricious transfer of affection that might almost have been said to be actually plighted to the friend of our heroine; he was in fact a serious and somewhat reserved character, while even in his gayest moments. Florence now recalled

to memory the shade of gloom she had seen intrude on his hilarity ; but it was like the passing cloud of a dispersed storm, whose strength seemed to have been previously spent. He had travelled much on the Continent, but he never seemed to refer to the time passed there without pain and reluctance, which was succeeded by absence, and almost melancholy. There was a pleasing intelligence of feature, but seldom much of animation, in his countenance ; nor could the depth of his understanding be known to more than his immediately intimate associates, since, in general society, he was rather silent than otherwise ; and this appeared to arise, not from any enwrought pride of character, but a disinclination to make the effort to shine ; rather perhaps from a habitual depression of spirits, than natural indolence of mind.

Among the ladies of his own country at least, Florence and Ellen were those who most engrossed his conversation, and appeared to be, to him, the only objects of

interest in the female world ; until further knowledge of each seemed to rivet him more decidedly the admirer of the latter ; to which had succeeded those attentions of the apparent lover, that had finally most successfully secured the affections of his credulous and forsaken mistress.

The engagement which drew Florence from the young Portuguese, was a small dinner-party at the house of Mrs. Bentinck, situated about three miles from Litchfield. This lady was, however, by no means anxious for the success of her nephew's addresses to Miss Vincent, and latterly less intercourse had taken place between her and the inhabitants of Trent Abbey : but the intimacy had been so gradually dropped, that no offence could be taken, and the most perfect courtesy yet continued to be maintained ; for Mrs. Bentinck was well aware that her influence over the mind of her nephew was light and impotent indeed, when opposed to his passionate attachment to the lovely Florence.

rence. But with pain, dread, and apprehension, she perceived that personal beauty was the *ignis fatuus* which would lure him into forming the most important of human engagements; and for a man of his jealous disposition, she justly considered Florence Vincent a dangerous wife; that coquetry which, in a wild and volatile girl, appeared but as playful sport, would, in married life, assume the complexion, if it did not actually become culpable levity. She had deemed it an indispensable duty to represent this to the major; but, as she feared, her remonstrances had no effect; and the only hope of Mrs. Bentinck now was, that Miss Vincent might herself negative his proposals, and thus effectually prevent so ill advised a connexion, from which little of domestic happiness could be reasonably expected to accrue.

Lord Leslie was the only one of the Park inhabitants present at the already-mentioned dinner-party; and one other neighbour-

ing family, with captain Warner, completed the invited group.

On the entrance of Florence, she found Mrs. Bentinck deeply engaged in turning over the leaves of a book filled with emblematical engravings, from which she meant to select a few for the ornamental decoration of a fanciful cabinet, which rested on the table—"Cupid attempting to secure a winged heart!" exclaimed the old lady—"Alas! poor urchin! the heart of a modern belle does not answer as appropriate to thy motto—'*If I lose you, I am lost.*' Nay, if an antique, who has relinquished all claim upon the mischievous deity, dare venture a play upon the term, I would correct the mistake, and say the *loss* would be a *gain*."

"A blind bargain perhaps, my dear madam," rejoined Florence; "the random shaft of a coxcomb Cupid, and the fleeting heart of a coquette."

"It would be then even a matter of regret,"

gret," replied Mrs. Bentinck, with somewhat more gravity, "to separate a well-matched pair, if we were sure the coquette would only attract the coxcomb; but the danger is, that, by a discharge from a masked battery, these sort of random shafts you speak of may inflict a serious wound on what may be too estimable to suit the whimsical taste of a mere flutterer."

"True, madam; for behold a triumph of the little deity, as it is here exemplified, by his enchaining alike an owl and a goose, with the inscription—'*I entrap both the wise and the foolish.*' It would indeed be a wild-goose chase to attempt securing you, Miss Vincent;" said Lord Leslie.

"Yes, my lord; and Cupid's victim would indeed prove himself an owl by attempting it; presuming to take him not, as in ancient day, the attendant of Minerva, but as a modern representation of what I fear Mrs. Bentinck would denominate him, if so easily ensnared."

"Beware," returned Leslie, "of this se-

verity; tread softly on the threshold of love, lest you wake him; for witness him here decked in malicious gaiety, linking even a fox; thus proudly exhibiting that *he can catch the most cunning.*" And his lordship suffered a provoking smile to play over his features, as he marked the rising colour of Florence at the entrance of major Bentinck.

"We are in the midst of the loves, the muses, and the graces," said Matilda Dacre, alluding to the emblematical drawings scattered around them, "therefore approach with respectful deference."

"If they were confined to these senseless scraps of paper," he replied, "I should feel perfect security in my own safety; but when they have received the vital spark of life, and appear, as they now do, in *proprii personæ*, I tremble indeed at the encounter."

"Ah! but fear not, since kind *Cupid* is nigh," said Leslie, raising another engraving from the table, "and even presents to
your

your acceptance the blushing *rose de bon esperance*."

"It is but a fragile symbol of hope," rejoined Florence, laughing.

"And yet," said Mrs. Bentinck, "even this fragile symbol I have seen the subject of a Cupid treasure, thoughtless of its thorns, and wonder to behold it wither with the variable atmosphere of a day. Ah! if that little word *to-morrow* could be engraven on all the gifts of love, it might tend to remind us of their universal similitude to the rose, which four-and-twenty hours may render valueless, and the cherished emblem of one day be lost in the estimation of the next!"

"Then, like Basil's *to-morrow*," said Bentinck, "I trust it will never arrive."

"An expiring Cupid presenting *heart's-ease* would be the happiest gift, I believe," rejoined Florence.

"And thus," returned Horace, "in fearful anticipation, you would annihilate the very existence of an idol, at whose shrine
you

you might otherwise, in penance for past defiance, be, however unwillingly, at length rendered a devotee."

A reply hovered on the lips of our heroine, as, with a smile of peculiar archness, she turned towards Bentinck, when their attention was diverted by a peal of mirth from captain Warner, as he pointed to a terrified representation of the little deity mounted upon the back of a demon, under which was scrolled—" *The devil take love.*"

"A truce then to the subject, I pray you," subjoined Florence; "follow it no further, lest we all become scorched by the threatened flames."

"And with poor Camoens exclaim," rejoined Leslie, "that '*the heaven and hell of a lover are wondrous near.*'"

CHAP. XV.

To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art ;
Spontaneous joys, where Nature has its play,
The soul adopts, and own their first-born sway ;
Lightly they frolic o'er the vacant mind,
Unenvy'd, unmolested, unconfin'd :
But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,
With all the freaks of wanton wealth array'd,
In these, ere triflers half their wish obtain,
'The toiling pleasure sickens into pain ;
And e'en while fashion's brightest arts decay,
The heart distrusting, asks if this be joy? GOLDSMITH.

The neglected Beauty.

THE great and important day then had at length arrived, which was selected for the *fête* at Bromley Park ; and, as is usual on
6 such

such occasions, the amusements had been ideally anticipated by varied reporters in the neighbourhood, as to the strangeness and singularity of the destined entertainment ; for strange and singular, it was generally conceived, every thing must be appertaining to the family of Leslie. But, alas ! the thirsters for novelty were disappointed ; lord Trelawney had given an order to the first artificers in town to send down workmen to prepare every fashionable and tonish arrangement, according to general custom, for this *fête* in compliment to his son ; he conformed to the established usages of society in giving it, and he therefore resolved it should be altogether conformable to the habits of higher life. There was a *dejeuné*, fireworks, a concert, a ball, and a supper, as has been said, sung, and rehearsed a thousand times before, alike in the volume of life and the volume of romance ; therefore, according to the literary *finale* of a Chinese writer, I may conclude with, “ *What can I say more ?*”

more?" Yet if this entertainment presented none of the dear delights of novelty, the hero of it did certainly excite surprise in Florence, when, as the carriage which conveyed herself and the Dacres along the banks of the Trent, rapidly proceeding to the festivities of Bromley, she beheld with astonishment its young and handsome heir seated on the projection of a rocky cliff, without either hat or coat, his boots and clothes covered with mud, and himself deeply intent on collecting shells in a small fishing-basket. He looked up, as the carriage drew near him, nodded good-humouredly to Florence, a glance from whose eyes he caught, and then continued his occupation with the greatest composure.

The youthful lady Elizabeth Leslie received the guests, and conducted herself with a degree of affability and condescension that astonished and delighted, as being wholly unexpected; she seemed to think it necessary to sacrifice her very nature as
a com-

a complimentary offering on this auspicious day, to a brother whom she proudly idolized, not for his native worth, but as the heir of her noble house, since her disposition was too wrapt in self to feel the warmth of a tender sisterly affection.

The earl was as usual—no event could alter him; he deigned to receive no one, he scarcely noticed the congratulations of his friends, affected not to hear them, or else that, hearing them, he deemed the attention not worth an acknowledgment.

The *dejeuné* had concluded without the appearance of him in whose honour it was given; but at length, on a general rising of the guests to repair to the other rooms, a sort of buzzing exclamation from those near the door announced the entrance of the hero of the day; and as he moved forward, he did indeed look the worthy heir of Trelawney's ancient honours; for who that then surveyed the nobility and almost grandeur of his mien, would have believed him the boyish companion of a preceding day?

day? A full consciousness of the situation he was born to fill appeared to animate his breast, as an air of dignity, distant from arrogant triumph, and displaying rather the elevation of a free independent soul, than the narrow exultation of personal pride, stamped his features with an almost majesty of beauty; yet somewhat of his habitual smile of mischief still hovered on his lip, as he witnessed the astonishment and admiration he had excited; yet it seemed rather to amuse than elate him, since no vain conceit had place in the heart of Leslie. To all the guests he was individually attentive, courteous, and conciliating, save to Florence; to her he was strangely inattentive, to Florence who, on this day, of all others, was most solicitous for his homage. In vain, to compensate for this dereliction, she beheld at her side a succession of admirers—one passed after the other, disregarded; in vain was tendered the adulating compliment; in vain audible whispers around proclaimed the beauties

beauties of her face, the graces of her form, her gay vivacious manner; still Florence was discontented, angered, and mortified; she scarcely attended to the devoted Bentinck sufficiently to give him a correct answer to his observations; she only danced down with him the first of a set, then laughed at his disappointment in not securing her for more, was sullen at his complaints, and gave vent to her chagrin against one admirer, by teasing another. Coquetry was carried to a verge at which even Bentinck indignantly revolted; and in a fit of justifiable resentment, he quitted her towards the close of the evening, unable longer to support the caprices of that beauty which enslaved him.

- Florence now yielded to sarcasm with her other admirers, as they each alternately sought to obtain the station deserted by the major; she gave way to an ill-timed petulance of *repartée* she herself vainly deemed wit, and soon distanced the bevy of beaux, who retreated from this errone-

ous

ous artillery ; and even beauty, for once, failed in its accustomed victory.

The greater part of the company had at length dispersed ; Mr. Vincent and Mrs. Dacre were engaged at cards, and the daughters of the latter were occupied in the last dance, as the discontented and fretful beauty seated herself in the least frequented part of the ball-room, impatiently awaiting the arrival of the carriage, which was to convey her from a scene of mortification that had terminated so different to her natural expectations. While thus solitary in the midst of a gay party, she was unexpectedly surprised by the sudden appearance and address of lord Leslie himself—" As the hero of the day, fair lady, I have seen myself both sought and courted ; but, as the hero of the day, I could feel no gratification in the smiles and attention of even the fascinating Florence—they would have depressed rather than flattered me ; I should have been jealous of the poor puppet set up for worship,

ship,

ship, although it assumed my own shape. But when Ferdinand is simply himself again, divested of this odious congratulatory homage, then will he freely acknowledge that the lovely Vincent is, to him, the most interesting object among women"—Leslie stopped; it was not a pause of irresolution, nor yet of emotion; but it served to give impressive force to his succeeding words; "for she is the chosen of his friend."

The vivid roseate of gratified delight had tinged the cheeks of Florence, at the first declaration of his lordship; but the conclusion chilled the flame of vanity; and our heroine evinced at least the virtue of candour, in not being able to dissemble she was disappointed, mortified, and hurt.

Leslie surveyed her a minute, with an expression of countenance she could not develop—it was as distinct from love as admiration; but there was an interest, a tenderness almost feminine, a distress, and an embarrassment, strangely blended in his gaze, as in that eccentric language he sometimes

sometimes assumed to command—" Banish from your bosom the asp coquetry, that extracts the nobler essence of your heart; look on poor Bentinck, and read, in the struggles of that countenance, the tortured feelings which he vainly would seek to conceal: he, Miss Vincent, is a warm, a disinterested lover; portionless, you would be equally dear to him, as if decked in all the wealth of India's golden clime. All men are not thus: treasure then the passing moments, trifle not with the attachment that now awaits you, nor cruelly heighten those torturing doubts and fears that harass a lover's mind, by the lengthened coquetry of disingenuous irresolution. Pardon my freedom; yet deem me impertinent, presuming, officious, or what you will, so that my appeal effect the wished intent. Do not delay; you know not—hereafter——" Again he hesitated, abashed, confused, embarrassed, and distressed—" I dare not say all I wish; I have already, for one so recently known to you,

given

given a latitude to my language to which I claim no right; advice, unrequired, unsolicited, appears, at best, officious and obtrusive; but believe me, when I dare affirm the strength and validity of the motive which operates."

Strangely bewildered, Florence now, in her turn, surveyed lord Leslie; his countenance was flushed by the energy of his tone, and a pleading eloquence marked the fine and striking outline of his features: he clasped her hands within his own, as with a warmth of interest, and yet a tender respect, that at once surprised and subdued her—"To-morrow I quit Staffordshire; but, before I leave this, I feel no small anxiety to be ascertained of the fate of my friend; and, on my return, I yet hope to greet you as irrevocably his. Florence," he added, in a manner the most impressive, "*you love*: in vain you seek to veil the strength of your attachment: you have a heart capable of warm and sanguine affections—it has already involuntarily
elected

ected its object ; yet you would still deceive yourself into misery, you would run counter to its decided and commendable impulse. But mark the parting words of disinterested friendship ; if you become not the wife of Horace Bentinck, you will live to rue the wayward variety of your own disposition ; and he, alike with yourself, will fall its victim. Yet you have virtues, virtues that, were they strengthened and invigorated by circumstance, might rise to triumph over the usurpation of folly's idle troop. Farewell, Miss Vincent ; reflect, and mar not Nature's fairest work, by the capricious spoils of art." Then, as if sensible of the approach of Bentinck, with the earl his father, he assumed a more comic strain of even romantic irony—
" Adieu, sweet Florence ! fair nymph of the Trent ! and when the Abbey clock diurnally chimes this hour, may the pendulum of memory strike sympathetic, to recall the parting bequest of poor "*Ferdinand the savage* !"

His eyes fixed on the blooming girl as he spoke ; his look penetrated to her very soul ; the heart of Florence trembled beneath it ; she had, at the first moment, fearfully retracted from that very peculiar gaze ; and again her eyelids were raised, with a timidity foreign to her habits, as she involuntarily sought, by another glance, to comprehend its import : but he whose view she sought had disappeared—she saw him no more that evening ; yet he had left on her mind a strange indefinable weight, that vanished not with himself.

* * * * *

The following day, as major Bentinck sat in his dressing-gown, lounging over a solitary breakfast, in his quarters at Litchfield, he indulged in a complete misanthropic execration against all womankind ; but yet more against himself, for that fatal infatuation which still bowed him the wretched slave of the caprices and whims of the unfeeling, but, to him, ever beautiful and attractive Florence, whose conduct, the
preceding

preceding evening, had even surpassed that coquettish tyranny in which she had, at any antecedent time, indulged. While thus dwelling on the object he was most anxious to banish from his heart, yet was more than ever the theme of his every thought, he was surprised by the entrance of lord Leslie—"You have taken an early ride, my lord, after the fatigues of last night," said Bentinck, as the servant placed a chair at the breakfast table for his lordship.

Ferdinand paused, till the domestic had quitted the room, and then replied—"Yes, I have in fact had a restless night, after the irksome *duties, or pleasures*, perhaps I ought to style them, of yesterday; and despairing of the influence of sleep, I rose by times, and taking my horse from a but half-awakened groom, who had not so easily thrown off his part of the festivity, I sallied forth unattended, wishing particularly to have some private conversation with you; and this must in fact be expedient.

ditionous, as my travelling-carriage is ordered to be in readiness for me at the Park, by twelve o'clock; for longer I cannot delay my departure: and thus I have little time to spend with you, now I am arrived."

"Then let us not lose that short space by preamble," said the major, "but proceed at once to the subject, be it what it may."

"It is one," returned Leslie, with an irresistible smile it was not in his nature to command, "which, I believe, was occupying your thoughts when I entered, if I may judge from your abstracted and uneasy air—it is of Florence Vincent that I would speak."

"What! what of her?" exclaimed Bentineck, relapsing into all the weak apprehension of the lover; "what have you to tell me of her so important? Is she ill? is she—Tell me, for God's sake tell me the worst! My mind is tortured by a thousand undefinable fears."

"There is nothing, my good fellow,
5 that

that need in any shape distress you," rejoined Leslie; "I only come to recommend her to your immediate attention."

"What, then, I have a dangerous rival, you have discovered, whom she prefers, whom she encourages, to the destruction of my hopes?" and Leslie actually was many minutes before he could destroy the impression thus suddenly imbibed by the self-tormenting imagination of his impetuous friend—"But if I can rely on your assurance," Bentinck at length returned, "wherefore the necessity of recommending to my more serious attention, her who has so long exclusively engrossed it?"

"Yes," replied Leslie, "I think she has engrossed the lover's attention much, much too long."

The jealous Horace felt his heart agitated by an unworthy suspicion of even this his dearest friend, as he subjoined—"I understand your lordship; you are most anxious I should resign the prize I so long have sought to secure?"

“No, Bentinck,” calmly replied the former, “you widely mistake me; on the contrary, I wish you at once to attain it, to end this frivolous delay, this inconsistency of conduct on her part, to throw off this humiliating vassalage that reflects both on her and yourself, and determinately to claim a decisive answer to addresses that have been so ungenerously sported with. It is with sorrow, regret, nay, perhaps almost indignation, I have so long beheld you the victim of coquetry, subjected to the ridicule and animadversion of all your associates, to gratify an exuberance of female vanity that may be fatal to both. But, when I mention this, let me add, that these are her principal, if not her only foibles; and you, at least, see her divested of that art which, in most women, shelters the worst traits of disposition, and permits to be visible only the most amiable; and even the latter are but too often assumed. With Miss Vincent, on the contrary, a different method is pursued; and her really
estimable

estimable virtues are thrown intirely in the shade, by that perverse folly which has sapped the finer particles of her nature. But yet, amid all, she loves you; I am convinced of it; and that attachment, properly fostered, may, indeed, I think, will have strength to overpower the dream of coquetry; it will not, if I judge aright, allow her to give a trifling negative to addresses secretly so acceptable; and if she finds that the matter must be brought to issue, that you await, and determinately rest on a final decisive dismissal, or acceptance, your affection is, I am convinced, so necessary to her real happiness, that the latter will be your fate."

Now it happened that this advice had but co-operated with the previous reflections of major Bentinck, and the further observations of Leslie decided him in the execution of the advice of his lordship. Ferdinand, therefore, soon after quitted him, with expressions of a firm expectation he should, on his return to Stafford-

L 4

shire,

shire, greet his friend as the husband of his long-loved Florence. But, with the departure of Leslie, the courage of Horace fled; and he even trembled at the temerity of the step he had promised the very next day to execute. But, conscious that he could write with more firmness and resolution than he could command, in the presence of one so ardently, so devotedly the mistress of his future happiness or misery, he determined on the former method of conveying his sentiments, and at once call upon Florence to decide on the most important of worldly events in this sublunary life.

The letter was, after much alteration and realteration, and many hours of reconsideration, dispatched, towards the close of the following evening, to Trent Abbey; and let those who have experienced the tortures of suspense under similar circumstance, compassionate the agitation of its writer, during the tedious interval that must necessarily elapse ere an answer could be

be rationally expected : and as poor Ben-
tinck had not selected a *reasonable* mistress,
he was but in justice bound to arm himself
with a double portion of patience on this
momentous occasion.

CHAP. XVI.

“ For something still there lies

In Heav'n's dark volume, which I read through mists.”

The Liverpool Packet.

THE wind blew fair and fresh, as the impatient captain of a Liverpool packet, bound for Dublin, summoned the lingering passengers to bid a last adieu to their friends on shore, as he reminded them of the necessity of instant embarkation. One, however, who belonged not to the little group, had already entered the vessel; for in his fate no one appeared interested, no friendly voice bade him farewell, no friendly hand gave the last pressure of regard, nor were the eyes of either individual of the party yet

yet on shore directed towards him. The wretched Sidney Maitland, the new-made husband, lay extended on the deck; a plank supported an arm, on the hand of which his head rested in a reclining posture; nor did he, even when the other passengers crowded on board, seem to heed that curious and inquiring gaze which was rivetted on him.

The cable was slipt, the anchor weighed, the sails unfurled, when the rough voice of a sailor from the shore arrested their attention, by repeatedly calling to them to stop, as another passenger wished to get on board. This appeal to the captain's purse was not to be resisted: the newly-arrived claimant spoke not, but suffered his honest friend the tar to conclude, in brief language, the terms of admission. No birth was vacant; but, if the stranger chose to come on board, he was welcome, for the stipulated sum. The reply to this was a move towards the ship; a piece of money was placed in the hand of the sailor, who thankfully received it, while his arm was tendered by way of support

support to the donor, as he stepped on board, whose figure, scarcely more than four feet in height, was wrapt in a large great-coat, lined and trimmed with fur, displaying huge capes of the same—a dress which might have proclaimed the wearer a female, if our youths of fashion had not adopted this feminine apparel, to shield the delicate forms of modern men; but a hat, which Ephraim's self might have deemed strictly decorous and appropriate to his sect, formed a wayward contradiction to the tonish curricule-coat: the head was bent downwards, the arms were folded, and in silence the most profound the figure was seated. Many were the attempts which, by curiosity, were excited to draw its object into conversation; but, as they all proved vain, it was at length concluded that the deaf and dumb could alone have resisted the artillery planted. But the elegance of the fashion, and the newness of the garb, announced no pauper; and each, therefore, sought to discover the features of a face which

which might, in some degree, satisfy the insatiable curiosity raised : but the stormy clouds which had, for some previous moments, been gathering together in a clustering mass, now sending forth those large humid drops, the usual harbingers of a thunder storm, soon put this propensity to flight ; and the passengers hastily beginning to retreat below, at length left this singular being alone, seated on the edge of the vessel.

The captain was busily enforcing his orders to his men, the deck was a fearful scene of nautical exclamation, and the active sailors prepared for the threatened storm, which the sudden rise of the wind directed rapidly towards them : some minutes had thus elapsed, when captain Morris discovered the lost, abstracted posture of Maitland, as, heedless of the falling rain or pelting hail, he continued immoveable as a statue ; this observation was followed by advice to follow the steps of his fellow-passengers. A pettish negative, which evinced

evinced more anger at the disturbance of his reverie, than gratitude for the attention of honest captain Morris, convinced the latter that his admonition had not been well received ; and he bestowed not another thought on the ungracious Sidney.

A few minutes more elapsed, when that part of the deck where still sat the apparently deaf and dumb object of curiosity, and the meditative unobservant Maitland, was now scarcely visited, save by a passing sailor busied in his own vocation. The warmly-clad voyager arose, and without raising the slouched hat, bent the eyes beneath it, with a suspicious scrutinizing glance around ; then silently approaching behind the unhappy Maitland, grasped his arm with the left hand, while, as he started up from the intruder, with the intention of shaking him off from his hold, the right pointed, with emphatic movement, to the *gold ring* which encircled the wedding-finger of that hand which had dared detain him. A shivering horror breathed its influence

fluence to the very soul of Sidney ; his eyes were averted, as from some appalling agonizing object ; and wresting his arm from her convulsed hold, he pressed his hands against his throbbing forehead.

With an air of arrogant exultation, the mysterious bride threw from her the concealing hat ; and even a passing sailor felt his steps arrested by astonishment, at the unequalled loveliness of the countenance that accidentally met his view ; for beauty sat enthroned thereon, in her most certain empire. “ Maitland,” she exclaimed, in a tone of towering command, “ behold thy wife ! and if my face finds no reflection in thy mind, let this deformed, mis-shapen figure, strike conviction of Henrietta’s self !” and, with proud disdain, she threw back the wrapping-cover which had enveloped her distorted form.

“ Woman ! to my sight, of all creation, the most appalling ! dreadful, dreadful being ! inscrutable Henrietta ! no longer haunt the
the

the steps of thy most wretched victim!—
Away! in mercy away!”

“Never!” she uttered, in wild determined accent, “never!”

“Have I not,” he resumed, “given you fortune? have I not conferred on you the cherished and highly-respected name of my ancestral house? What would you more; that you thus torture me in pursuit?”

“One avaricious thought this bosom never knew; and had ambition swayed, I might, in Portugal, have borne a mightier name than that which Sidney Maitland could bestow: and as to your heart,” she added, while bitterest contempt swelled her nether lip, as it paused on the term, “I would trample on the despised, the detested gift, if it were offered to mine acceptance! Still you have become my husband, nor can you invalidate that sacred bond which has made us one. From your caresses I would shrink with aversion as deep as you could recoil from mine; still will I accompany

accompany you wherever you roam, still will I proclaim myself *your wife*, and demand a husband's protection. Mark yon clouds; see how they meet, yet clash; and the very attraction which draws them together gives birth to the destructive bolt—Such is our fate. Reflection may to you unravel the similitude, but it will fail to annihilate it. In *hate* I gave my hand, in *hate* you pledged me yours, and deception sullied not the contract!”

END OF VOL. I.

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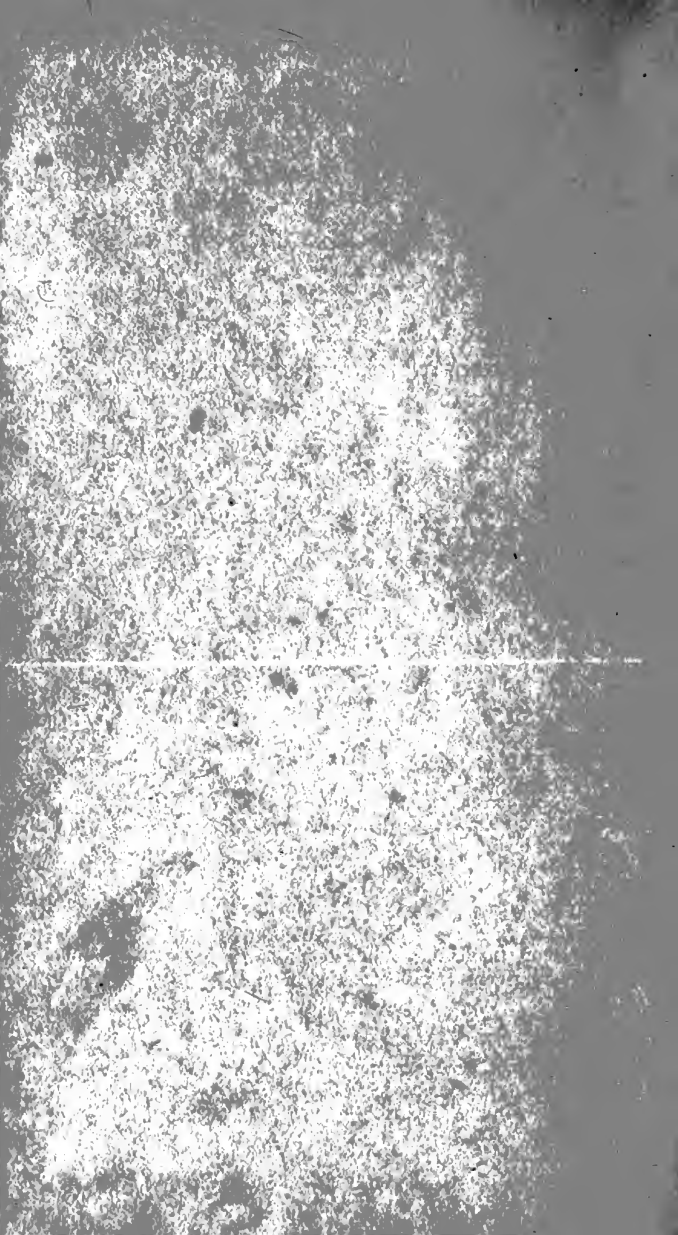
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